

Little Dorrit Study Guide

Little Dorrit by Charles Dickens

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Plot Summary

Little Dorrit, by Charles Dickens, is the story of Amy Dorrit, a kind and compassionate young woman who is born impoverished and becomes wealthy, but retains her goodness and strength of character throughout.

Amy, often called Little Dorrit because of her small stature, is modest and giving, and often taken for granted by her siblings and her father. She is the rock of the family throughout their years in Marshalsea Prison, and through her hard work and diligence, creates a home of comfort and love. As she is growing up in the prison, Amy gathers devoted friends of all types, and becomes known for her good heart.

William Dorrit, Amy's father, has been in the debtors' prison for so many years he is finally promoted to manage the place. William has always fancied himself a gentleman wronged, and behaves as if the tips he receives from released prisoners are the result of their high regard for him. His daughter Fanny has found work as an actress, and his son Tip finds difficulty being employed. Amy works behind the scenes to ensure her brother and sister have opportunities.

Arthur Clennam has returned to England from a twenty year stint in China, working with his father. He has come home to confront his mother and ask her to reveal a secret he knows exists in their family. Mrs. Clennam rebuffs his attempts and Arthur turns the family business over to a longtime family servant, Jeremiah Flintwinch. It is at the home of his mother that Arthur first sees Amy Dorrit, and becomes intrigued by her.

Rigaud, a murderer and prison escapee, has changed his name to Blandois and comes to England to seek a new fortune. He begins inserting himself into the Clennam household through a contrived friendship with Jeremiah Flintwinch.

Through Arthur's friendship with Mr. Meagles, he meets and becomes business partners with Daniel Doyce. The two men battle with the Office of Circumlocution in order to bring Daniel's inventions to the service of the public. Arthur begins to fancy Minnie Meagles, the daughter of his friend, but she is in love with Henry Gowan, and eventually marries him.

Arthur's investigative tendencies and compassion for Little Dorrit lead him to hire Pancks to explore the source of William Dorrit's debts. Pancks discovers that not only did Dorrit not owe anyone money, he has a vast inheritance waiting to be claimed.

When the Dorrit family becomes wealthy, everyone changes except Amy. Fanny becomes a debutante immersed in society, and Tip becomes a fine gentleman. Amy prefers to be alone, and thinks fondly of the days when she and her father would sit by the fire in the prison quarters.

The Dorrit family head to Italy. There they find Minnie Meagles and her artist husband Henry Gowan, and the fabulously wealthy and powerful Merdles. Mrs. Merdle is in



Rome, where she spends her summers while Mr. Merdle, the famous banker, is in England. William Dorrit is thrilled to be introduced to the Merdle family and when Fanny catches the eye of Sparkler, Mrs. Merdle's son, Dorrit encourages a marriage. When Dorrit makes a trip back to England, he meets with Mr. Merdle and gives the banker control of the Dorrit money. Arthur and Pancks also invest in Merdle's company, as Merdle is hailed as the greatest economic mind of England.

Amy does not go to balls or participate in any of the refining activities her father expects of her. Amy is now considered to be holding back the family with her behavior, and the days at Marshalsea are quickly forgotten. Only Frederick, William's brother and part of the entourage, sees her value and character.

Soon after Fanny is married, William becomes very ill and dies. Frederick dies soon after, and Tip becomes ill. Amy nurses her brother back to health. In England, Merdle commits suicide and it is revealed that his company was a scam. All people who invested are ruined.

Arthur has lost everything and is now living at Marshalsea. His health is failing, he feels very old and useless. Rigaud's plot to blackmail the Clennam family is rapidly coming to fruition.

Amy finds out about Arthur and rushes to his side, acknowledging that she has always loved him. Arthur gets better, and is surprised to learn of her love. He realizes he has loved her all these years as well.

Mrs. Clennam rushes to the prison and gets Amy to help her confront Rigaud, but as the two women approach the Clennam house, it explodes, killing the villain. Meagles and Daniel come up with the funds to release Arthur from prison. That night, Arthur and Amy are married.



Book the First: Poverty, Chapters I-VII

Book the First: Poverty, Chapters I-VII Summary

Chapter I, opens in Marseilles, France, in August. Two men, John Baptist Cavalletto and Monsieur Rigaud, are in a dismal cell. When the jailer comes to bring them their dinner, he advises Rigaud that he has been called to see the tribunal. Rigaud is accused of murdering his wife. In Chapter II, the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Meagles, their daughter Minnie and her maid Tattycoram, Arthur Clennam and Miss Wade are introduced as travellers in France who are returning to England. Miss Wade encounters Tattycoram alone when the maid is crying, and assumes the woman is as unhappy with life as Miss Wade has always been.

In Chapter III, Mr. Clennam is in London, after an absence of twenty years in China, and must go to the house of his mother, a strict, religious, unbending woman. When he finally arrives at the house where he was raised, Arthur waits in the parlor, and finds it unchanged in the years he has been away. When he is taken to his mother, he finds she has not been out of her room for over twelve years now. Another servant, an old woman named Affery stands in the dark, awaiting orders from Mrs. Clennam. While Arthur is waiting for Affery to prepare him a room, she begins speaking to Arthur about her husband, Jeremiah Flintwinch, and Arthur realizes she is afraid of Jeremiah. Affery tells Arthur Jeremiah and Mrs. Clennam are plotting to marry him off to his old sweetheart, who is now a widow and wealthy. Arthur asks about a young woman he saw in his mother's room, and is told that is Little Dorrit. In Chapter IV, Mrs. Flintwinch has a dream. She dreams of her husband, and in the dream there are two Jeremiahs, and they are fighting over a box.

In Chapter V, it is Monday morning, Arthur meets with his mother, asking her to tell him the family secret he knows must exist about his father. He tells her he will not be assuming control over the family business because of it. Arthur implores his mother to tell him the secret, so he can make reparation, but this only enrages her. Jeremiah Flintwinch has assumed the new role of partner in the business, as Arthur wants no part of it. As a result of the gloomy surroundings and the stern attitude of his mother, Arthur decides to lodge at the coffee house. He has become intrigued with Little Dorrit, however, and decides to learn more about her.

Chapter VI, is a flashback to the story of Little Dorrit's birth and upbringing. In a debtor's prison in Marshalsea, England, a prisoner's wife is having a baby. When the prisoner says he never dreamed his child would be born in a prison, the doctor says it is a wonderful place, with freedom from the creditors. When the child is eight years old, the prisoner's wife dies. The prisoner becomes the oldest prisoner in the Marshalsea debtors prison, and when the turnkey dies, he takes over the position. He takes his new job as Father of Marshalsea very seriously, and he receives tips as the debtors eventually leave the premises. The Father accepts the money, uses it to feed his family, and has come to expect it from the wealthy prisoners. In Chapter VII, the child, Amy,



has become a favorite of all the prisoners. Amy finds the concept of a world without a gate and locks to be intriguing. The youngest child learns many things, takes care of her older brother and sister, and becomes, in effect, the head of the small family. She arranges for her sister to have dancing lessons, taught by one of the temporary inmates of the prison. She herself chooses a milliner to teach her needlework. In time, the sister, Fanny, goes to live with an uncle so she can pursue her dream of dancing. Amy's brother Tip, is eighteen, and Amy is concerned about his future. She tries many times to find him work, but he continues to work at it for a bit, grows bored and tired of it, and returns to Marshalsea. One night he comes back after a few months and tells Amy he is actually a prisoner now, being in debt he cannot pay. At twenty-two, Amy is still living in the Marshalsea prison, but works from eight in the morning to eight at night for Mrs. Clennam, and is known in that house as Little Dorrit.

Book the First: Poverty, Chapters I-VII Analysis

These chapters provide the exposition of the main characters: Little Dorrit, Arthur, the Meagles family, the Dorrit family, Mrs. Clennam and her household staff, and Rigaud. One of the main locations of the story, Marshalsea, is described as well. Many character traits are established that will hold true for the entire novel in these chapters, and some are stereotypical of a melodrama novel set in mid-19th century England.

Rigaud attempts to justify his murderous behavior, and is clearly the villain of the story. Amy Dorrit is the protagonist, and is a good, loving soul who helps others. Arthur is a man of honor, Meagles a generous and friendly soul, and Minnie, a protected and beloved daughter.

The author uses the quarantine facilities to create a commonality for Meagles, Arthur and Miss Wade, because these characters are not likely to meet under any other circumstances.

Marshalsea is a place where people usually come and go, depending on the status of their fortunes, and clearly Dorrit's case is an unusual one since he stays for over twenty years. The prison is dark and cold and small, and although sellers and family members are allowed to come and go as they please through the gates, the prisoners are restricted to its walls. The author shows Little Dorrit converting these hopeless and dark surroundings into a home, simply through the strength of her character and disposition.

Suspense arises for the reader in these chapters, as the Clennam secret is yet to be revealed. There is also the mystery of Rigaud's status after leaving the prison.



Book the First, Chapters VIII - XI

Book the First, Chapters VIII - XI Summary

In Chapter VIII, Arthur follows Little Dorrit and learns that she lives at the debtors prison. He accompanies Little Dorrit's uncle Frederick into the prison and is introduced to William Dorrit. Arthur soon understands that Little Dorrit is the strength of her small family, and is devoted to her somewhat addled father. That evening he tells Amy he wants the two of them to be friends. In Chapter IX, Arthur arranges to meet Amy at the home of her Uncle Frederick. Amy arrives and the two go for a walk by the iron bridge. Arthur suggests that he talk with some of William Dorrit's creditors, to release him from jail, but Amy says that would make things worse instead of better, because her father has been there so long he would have nowhere else to go. Arthur offers to set Tip free, and Amy agrees that would be good. Arthur and Amy decide to be friends. As they return to the prison, they are greeted by Maggy, an older woman who adores Amy, but seems to have difficulty with communication and thinking clearly. Maggy was seriously ill when she was ten, and although she has aged to almost thirty now, she continues to behave as a ten year old. Arthur learns that when Maggy's family abandoned her, Amy Dorrit took her in.

In Chapter X. the Circumlocution Office of the government is described. It is the most important department, and nothing is done without its authority. Its purpose is to show other departments how "not to do it." The Barnacle family has long been involved in the administration of the Circumlocution Office, and feel they are caring for the administration of the entire country. Arthur has learned that the creditor holding the biggest lien against Amy's father is Tite Barnacle, and Arthur goes to the Circumlocution Office to meet him. Arthur's attempts to ascertain the nature of the debt of William Dorrit is frustrated by double talk and incompetent Barnacles. He is handed many forms to fill out, and leaves after several hours. As Arthur is leaving the building, he is surprised to see Mr. Meagles collaring a man and dragging him down the street. Arthur discovers that the man is Daniel Doyce, a friend of Meagles, who has invented something that will serve the public, but in his attempts to have the invention certified, he has run afoul of the Circumlocution Office and the project has been lost inside that government department for over twelve years. Meagles was just removing Doyce from yet another attempt to legalize his invention. The three men return to the factory, by way of the Bleeding Heart Yard.

In Chapter XI, Rigaud has escaped from prison and is traveling through the French countryside. He discovers Cavalletto at an inn, and proposes the two men join forces, but Cavalletto runs away from Rigaud as soon as the man falls asleep.



Book the First, Chapters VIII - XI Analysis

These chapters answer the question about Rigaud's whereabouts, and about the willingness of his former cellmate to accompany him for his next escapade.

Further reinforcement of the good character traits of Little Dorrit are in the story of her adoption of Maggy, and her acknowledgement of her father's true condition. Amy's care for her older brother and sister, and their lack of appreciation of her is evident in their demands for her mending services.

Arthur's character is reinforced when he sees the shabbiness of the prison and its inhabitants but does not turn away from the Dorrit family.

The author's theme of using sarcasm to highlight his view of the British government is provided in much detail in these chapters. The Office of Circumlocution is of course fictitious, but describes the way bureaucracy can slow business to a crawl, and how self-important government officials can arrange for their own friends and relatives to rise within the system. Rather than state a purpose and mission of accomplishing tasks, this Office of Circumlocution is proud to be the source for how not to do things. Pride is achieved in this office by stopping progress and resentment against Arthur, who is trying to find answers, is understandable in this atmosphere.



Book the First, Chapters XII - XIV

Book the First, Chapters XII - XIV Summary

In Chapter XII, Arthur pays off the debt owed by Tip, as he promised Amy he would. In Chapter XIII, Arthur tells himself it is for the good of Amy Dorrit that he goes to visit the Casby home, where Flora, his long ago love, lives. It is here that Arthur meets and becomes friends with Pancks. Arthur's reunion with his old girlfriend makes him realize how fortunate he was to be obligated to assist the family business in China and avoid marrying Flora. As Arthur leaves the Casby house, Flora is hinting that they renew their romance, and Arthur is glad to be walking towards town with Mr. Pancks. Mr. Pancks is talking about rent collecting and how he loves business. When Pancks turns off to his own house, Arthur wanders into town, and sees a crowd of people bearing a litter off to hospital. When Arthur learns the injured fellow is recently from Marseilles, like himself, he decides to accompany him to the hospital and take care of him. The man is Cavalletto, and Arthur promises to help care for him. When Arthur returns to his lodgings, Amy Dorrit comes to visit him. In Chapter XIV, Amy has come with Maggy as her companion, to speak to Arthur. She knows he is the person who enabled Tip to be a free man, and she thanks him from the bottom of her heart. Arthur asks if he may call her Little Dorrit, and she says she would like that.

Book the First, Chapters XII - XIV Analysis

These chapters introduce the characters of the Bleeding Heart Yard, a rental area for a variety of unusual lower class people who will come to play a part in the story. The whereabouts of Rigaud's cellmate is established when Cavalletto becomes a member of the Bleeding Heart crowd.

The name of the rental area is another example of Dickens' use of obvious titles as a device to provide a succinct description of a place, person or thing.

Arthur's actions in this chapter—paying off Tip's debt, assisting a stranger, and concern over Amy's wellbeing—are all typical behaviors of a man who is noble and decent.



Book the First, Chapters XV -XIX

Book the First, Chapters XV -XIX Summary

In Chapter XV, Mrs. Flintwinch dreams she is eavesdropping on a conversation between Mr. Flintwinch and Mrs. Clennam. Flintwinch is speaking not as a servant or a clerk but as a superior to Mrs. Clennam. He is chiding her for not telling Arthur the truth about his father. In Chapter XVI, Arthur goes to visit the Meagles in Twickenham, and decides to walk rather than take the coach. He considers his future and of that of Little Dorrit, of whom he has begun to think of as an adopted daughter. As he walks, he catches up with Daniel Doyce. The two men have a good conversation about Daniel's inventions and his need for a business partner, before they arrive at the home of Meagles. While enjoying the tour of the home and the company of the Meagles, Arthur contemplates courting Pet and decides against it. Over dinner, Tattycoram mentions she has heard from and met with Miss Wade. After dinner, Arthur asks Meagles to suggest to Daniel Doyce that he choose Arthur as his business partner. As Arthur goes to bed, he reminds himself that he has chosen not to fall in love with Pet. In Chapter XVII, Arthur meets Henry Gowan, a frequent visitor to the Meagles house., and takes an instant dislike to the man. When Pet joins them, it is clear that she is in love with Henry. Arthur learns from Daniel that Henry is a beneficiary of the Barnacle family, and that reinforces Arthur's dislike of Henry.

In Chapter XVIII, John Chivery, son of a prison guard, has admired Amy Dorrit since childhood, and dreams of the two of them marrying and running Marshalsea prison together. One day he wears his best clothes, takes cigars to Amy's father, and asks to see her. When he learns she is out on a walk, John goes to find her. He finds her at the iron bridge, but the conversation does not go the way he has planned. Amy asks him to forget about her, not to come find her in this spot again, and she hopes he finds a good wife. In Chapter XIX, William and Frederick Dorrit are walking around the prison yards, and William is comparing his life with that of Frederick. William admonishes Frederick to take better care of himself, and to be more like William. When the brothers encounter John Chivery's father on their walk, William is dismayed to find that John's father is unhappy with him. When William returns to his lodgings, Amy is there with his supper, and William breaks down, wondering how his life would be if the guards did not like him anymore. He talks about a previous prisoner whose daughter was admired by one of the guards, and how dangerous it was to rebuff these men. Amy stays by his side all night, apologizing.

Book the First, Chapters XV -XIX Analysis

The Meagles are presented as a family who has wealth and property, yet are not exclusive in their choice of companions. Daniel is an inventor and manufacturer, but not rich, and Arthur is a middle aged man with no current occupation, yet both men are welcomed at the Meagles' household with open arms.



Arthur is attracted to Minnie, but refrains from courting her because he knows on some level his destiny lies elsewhere. His comfort with Daniel foresees a great business partnership, and his discomfort with Henry shows the reader that if Arthur does not like someone, that person will not play the role of a hero in the story.

The introduction of Henry and his connections to the Barnacle family serve to tie some characters together with the Meagles, Arthur and Daniel.

Observing the Meagles, Pet and Tattycoram at their estate reveals to the reader that the Meagles are decent folk who love their daughter but are not overly possessive of her. Their reluctance to accept Henry as a suitor is based on their instincts about the man, not just because he is a threat to their possession of their daughter. The mention of Miss Wade and Tattycoram's meeting with her creates a small suspense regarding where that storyline may lead, since the reader recognizes these two women share an emotional discomfort with their lives.

William's chastisement of his older and befuddled brother Frederick is ironic. It is a testament to William's state of mind and distance from reality that he believes he is in a better world than his brother. William has been a prisoner for over twenty years and depends heavily on the benevolence of his prisoners and guards, and the care from his youngest daughter to survive every day, but believes himself to be some grand administrator or mayor. This illusion is quickly shattered by a gruff word from one of the guards, and William quickly becomes a weak and helpless old man, who attempts to manipulate Amy's behavior even more so that he may be comfortable.



Book the First, Chapters XX - XXIV

Book the First, Chapters XX - XXIV Summary

In Chapter XX, Little Dorrit goes to see her sister, Fanny. After rehearsal at the theatre, Fanny and Little Dorrit go for a walk. When Amy comments on an expensive bracelet Fanny is wearing, Fanny takes her to the home of Mrs. Merdle, an extremely wealthy woman whose husband is a well known and respected banker. Fanny has Mrs. Merdle explain to Little Dorrit that the bracelet was a gift from her in appreciation for Fanny spurning the advances of Mrs. Merdle's son, Sparkler. When Little Dorrit frowns at this exchange, Fanny turns upon her and says Little Dorrit would not feel that way if she had been out in the world and not sequestered in her home all of the time. In Chapter XXI, the character of Mr. Merdle is described. He is a very rich man, but not good at communicating. He is hosting dinner that evening for a number of the magnates of Society. As a result of his power and money, he is held in high regard by Society. While maintaining the haughtiness of their respective positions, the members of Society take turns approaching Mr. Merdle at dinner this evening to persuade him to send a little money in their direction, for the good of Society. Mr. Merdle's Physician discloses to one of the magnates that he has examined Merdle and can find nothing wrong, but the man is definitely ill.

In Chapter XXII, Arthur is visiting the Marshalsea prison, and the Chivery family asks for his assistance regarding John's rejection by Amy. Arthur is distressed to learn that Little Dorrit might have a suitor, but promises Mrs. Chivery he will look into the matter. He leaves the shop and walks towards the Iron Bridge, where he finds Little Dorrit. They walk together. They encounter Maggy who is somewhat confused to find them, but announces that she has two letters for Arthur, one from Tip and one from Little Dorrit's father. He opens the letters. Both are requests for money. Arthur answers both with funds. Little Dorrit tells him she must go back home, to the prison, and although he says it cannot be her true home, she assures him it is.

In Chapter XXIII, Mr. Meagles comes to tell Arthur that Daniel will accept his offer of business partnership only after Arthur has reviewed the books and the workshop. The examination is made, and is successful, and Arthur is happy to embark upon this new career. One day while at his office, he is surprised to see Flora and her late husband's aunt come to his office. Flora begins her endless chatter by admonishing Arthur for not returning to visit her. Flora goes on to apologize for marrying her husband rather than Arthur, and then asks about Little Dorrit. Flora wants to hire Little Dorrit, and Arthur says she is a good child who has been through many trials. Flora's father, Mr. Casby, and Mr. Pancks arrive at that moment. Flora's companion, the aunt, has several outbursts, as she tends to do, and Flora and Mr. Casby leave with her. Mr. Pancks comes back, asking Arthur for a word. Pancks is asking for information about the Dorrit family, and although he will not say why, he does say it is for the good. Arthur tells the man what he knows, and they agree to share information in the future.



In Chapter XXIV, Plornish tells Little Dorrit that Flora wishes to hire her, so Little Dorrit goes the next day to the Casby household to meet with her. All the while, Flora is talking, mostly about Arthur and how the two of them were destined to be together. Flora brings Little Dorrit to dinner, and Little Dorrit notices that Pancks is very interested in her, but she cannot understand why. After dinner, while Flora is taking a nap, Pancks comes to find Little Dorrit while she is working. He pretends to read her palm, telling her much about what he knows of her, and promises to tell her fortune someday. He asks her to not notice him when she sees him about the town. She agrees, and in the coming days, she sees Pancks everywhere she goes. As he continues to be everywhere in her life, Little Dorrit becomes more reclusive than ever. She begins to avoid everyone, including Arthur.

Book the First, Chapters XX - XXIV Analysis

Fanny's disapproval of Little Dorrit is evident in these chapters, and it appears Fanny has the same lack of appreciation for Amy as the rest of the Dorrit family. Fanny thinks of herself as worldly, and is obviously attracting the attentions of wealthy men. The character of Sparkler is introduced, another appropriately named character by the author, as this young man seems to have the personality of a sparkling firecracker whose usefulness is pretty but brief.

The author uses his description of Society, with a capital S, to refer to the prevailing and dominant group of people who are comprised of business owners, bank managers, certain government officials, and their wives, who have nothing better to do than go to dinner parties and pass judgement on others, all in the name of doing good for the public. The insinuation that Merdle is ill of an unknown but serious disease casts a long shadow in this story.

The iron bridge becomes symbolic to Amy as a place where she and Arthur meet, and Amy begins to realize how important this man is to her.

In these chapters, Arthur becomes friends and co-conspirators with Pancks, the stern but likable rent collector who is an entrepreneur as well. Suspense heightens when Arthur and Pancks agree to work together to discover the secret of the Dorrit family.



Book the First, Chapters XXV - XXX

Book the First, Chapters XXV - XXX Summary

In Chapter XXV, Mr. Pancks' life beyond that which applies to Mr. Casby is revealed. He resides in a nice apartment, and has begun to employ John Chivery for various missions. At the Bleeding Hearts Yard, Cavalletto becomes a part of the mix of characters. Pancks takes a liking to Cavalletto, and often stops by his room to say hello. In Chapter XXVI, Arthur and Daniel now share a house, and one evening Daniel is returning from a visit to see the Meagles, and stops in Arthur's room. Daniel reports that Gowan was there as usual on Sunday, and Daniel confesses he does not like the man. A few days later, Gowan comes to see Arthur asking him to dinner with himself and Mrs. Gowan. Arthur is astounded to learn, over dinner, that Mrs. Gowan wants Arthur's reassurances that the Meagles are not using their refusal to accept the betrothal of her son to Pet as a means to entrap Henry.

In Chapter XXVII, Arthur misses talking to Little Dorrit, who of late has been keeping her own company. One evening he returns home from the prison to find Mr. Meagles upset because Tattycoram is missing. For no reason they can understand, that night Tattycoram threw a raging fit, said she hated them all, and left the house. Meagles believes she has been to Miss Wade's house, so he and Arthur go there to ask about Tattycoram. Miss Wade says Tattycoram will now be known by her real name Harriett, and she will be staying with Miss Wade. Meagles is shocked to hear Miss Wade's version of how his family treated Tattycoram, but implores Tattycoram to reconsider. Meagles comments that Miss Wade is not someone Tattycoram should be emulating. Tattycoram refuses to go with them, and Miss Wade asks Arthur and Meagles to leave and not return.

In Chapter XXVIII, the Meagles continue in their efforts to get Tattycoram back, even after Miss Wade moves away, apparently taking the young woman with her, but to no avail. Arthur has a private conversation with Pet, and she tells him she knows if she leaves home, her parents will miss her terribly, and she loves them so much. When Minnie (Pet) asks Arthur to care for her father when she leaves, Arthur realizes he will never have Minnie for his wife, and that she is lost to Henry Gowan forever.

In Chapter XXIX, Jeremiah Flintwinch treats Affery more like a servant and less like his wife, and she can no longer tell what are dreams and what is reality. One night Pancks comes to call with the premise of seeing Mrs. Clennam, but he is really there to see Little Dorrit. He tells her he will be the one to tell her a fortune one day. Affery is eavesdropping on them, and then steps outside into the street, accidentally locking herself out of the house. A stranger comes up and helps Affery back into the house by crawling in an open window. The stranger asks for Flintwinch, so Affery goes to the pub to get him. In Chapter XXX, Flintwinch returns and takes the stranger into his office. The man introduces himself as Blandois. He presents a letter to Flintwinch from the Paris office instructing him to provide Blandois with fifty pounds sterling. Jeremiah makes



these arrangements, not knowing the man is actually Rigaud, the escaped prisoner and murderer. Blandois asks to be presented to Mrs. Clennam and hints that he will be bringing business to the family. As he is leaving, Blandois exclaims to Flintwinch that the two men will become good friends.

Book the First, Chapters XXV - XXX Analysis

These chapters show the skill Dickens has in weaving unlikely characters together, in a way that seems natural and plausible to the reader. Arthur's friendship with Meagles, with whom he shared quarantine, is now introduced to Henry Gowan, Mrs. Gowan and the attached Barnacles. His friendship with Flora has brought him into contact with Pancks, a useful accomplice in his search for answers about the Dorrit family.

Arthur's ties to Little Dorit are reinforced by her friendships with the Plornish family of Bleeding Heart Yard, her employment by Flora, and his meetings with her rejected suitor's family and with his acquaintance of many of the Bleeding Heart Yard residents.

The crisis with Tattycoram shows the strength of the friendship between he and Meagles. Tattycoram's escape to the company of Miss Wade aligns the two women, and provides another mystery to be solved.

The villain Rigaud/Blandois is never too far away in the plot, coming into Arthur's life without his knowledge as the blackhearted Rigaud is trying to insinuate himself into the Clennam household.



Book the First, Chapters XXXI - XXXVI

Book the First, Chapters XXXI - XXXVI Summary

In Chapter XXXI, Amy is walking with John Edward Nandy, an impoverished but good natured man who is Mrs. Plornish's adored father. When Plornish was incarcerated at Marshalsea, Nandy went to visit him, and became friends with William Dorrit. As they walk, they come upon Fanny, who is headed to see their father as well. Fanny yells at Little Dorrit for walking around with an old, poor man, and will not walk on the same side of the street with them. As they approach the prison gate, Mr. Dorrit is also outside, sees Amy and Nandy, and rushes back to his room. Mr. Dorrit is very upset to see Amy with the old, poor man, and Amy is crushed by thinking she has humiliated her father. Amy has no regard for class distinctions, but her father is mortified at the thought of his daughter being seen like this. John Chivery comes in at that moment to deliver a note from Arthur, who asks to see Mr. Dorrit and Amy that afternoon. When Clennam arrives, he takes tea with Dorrit and Amy. Tip comes in later and does not stay long when he sees Clennam. Dorrit leaves when Tip leaves, and Clennam has Amy alone, with only simple minded Maggy nearby. In Chapter XXXII, Arthur tells Little Dorrit he has missed her company, and is still her friend. He does not realize she has fallen in love with him. He asks if she has any secrets, and she says she does not. Pancks suddenly arrives, and asks Arthur to step outside with him. Pancks presents Arthur with a bundle of documents, saying this is what he has been looking for. In Chapter XXXIII, Mrs. Cowan reflects on the truth about Henry's marriage, the truth she does not want the rest of society to know about. Henry will never amount to anything, and this marriage to Minnie Meagles will result in all of Henry's debts being covered by the Meagles. To further promote her public standing on the issue, she meets with Mrs. Merdle and complains to her about the type of people her son has chosen to align himself with. Mrs. Merdle gives her approval, and Mrs. Gowan is happy. In Chapter XXXIV, the day of the wedding of Minnie and Henry approaches, and a large number of Barnacles, Henry's relatives, are coming to the Meagles residence to attend. The Meagles and Clennam are very sad when the young couple finally leave in their carriage to begin their new lives in Italy, where Henry will attempt to be a painter.

In Chapter XXXV, Pancks reveals to Arthur that William Dorrit has inherited a vast fortune, and his debts can now be repaid, and he has a large estate to run. Arthur finds Little Dorrit at the home of Mr. Casby, tells her the news, and they go together to tell William Dorrit. It is almost overwhelming to the Dorrit family, and Arthur is very happy to have played a part in rescuing this little family from poverty. In Chapter XXXVI, as the Dorrit family prepares to leave their Marshalsea prison home, everyone is fitted out with new clothes, including Frederick. On the day of departure, Fanny, Tip, William and Frederick are about to take the carriage away from the prison when William notices that Amy is not with them. Arthur comes running up, carrying Amy, and tells them she apparently had gone upstairs to dress and had fainted. As soon as she is restored to her family, the Dorrit carriage rumbles away, leaving the prison forever.

Book the First, Chapters XXXI - XXXVI Analysis

These chapters represent the end of Book the First: Poverty, appropriately revealing the discovery of the Dorrit family wealth. Finally William, Fanny and Tip will have the status and position they have long felt they deserved. Amy, on the other hand, is so immune to the fantastic opportunity the family now has, she falls asleep getting dressed to leave the prison. Symbolically, it is Arthur who rescues the family, and Arthur who finds Little Dorrit asleep on her bedroom floor and restores her to the family who has overlooked her once again.

The character of Arthur is highlighted through his determined efforts to find out about the Dorrit debt, and the ingenuity of Pancks has been critical in these efforts.

The author's theme of a pompous society is reinforced by the conversation of Mrs. Gowan and Mrs. Merdle, who is apparently the reigning director of what is acceptable and what is not.

There is closure in the marriage of Minnie and Henry, as Arthur's indecision about Pet has been decided for him. Meagles would have much rather had Arthur as his son-in-law, as he hints the man would have been a good match for Pet's twin who passed away as a child.



Book the Second, Chapters I-V

Book the Second, Chapters I-V Summary

In Chapter I, a group of foreign travelers arrive at a lodging in the Alps of Italy. It is the Dorrit family, Henry Gowan and Minnie Meagle and Blandois, who is actually Rigaud. After dinner, Minnie is not feeling well and retires early. Little Dorrit goes to her room, giving her a letter from Arthur. In Chapter II, the character of Mrs. General, and her reason for being part of the Dorrit entourage, is explained. She is a woman devoid of personality, curiosity or compassion, and has been hired by Mr. Dorrit to serve as a companion and instructor for his daughters. In Chapter III, Tip, Fanny and William discuss the new position of the family now that there is unlimited wealth. It is decided that Arthur, although he did discover their fortune, is someone to be avoided. Amy's friendship with him, and also with Minnie because of him, is to be discouraged. Everyone but Amy is full of their own elevated status and prefers to completely forget that just recently they were intimately acquainted with a debtors prison. At the next stop in their journey, the Dorrit family meet up with Mrs. Merdle and her vapid son Sparkler. Mrs. Merdle recognizes Fanny immediately as the young actress, but Sparkler does not recognize the transformed society girl he now sees in front of him. Mrs. Merdle and Fanny decide without speaking that the past is best forgotten. As the journey continues, Little Dorrit reflects on the difference of her life in the prison and now, where she is no longer the caretaker of the little family, and no longer very close to her father. The family makes its way to Venice, where they will be living for a few months, in a huge mansion. Little Dorrit does not participate in the fancy parties and balls, and asks only to be left alone, to explore the city by herself.

In Chapter IV, Little Dorrit writes a letter to Arthur, telling him about the family's trip to Venice, and how she often misses the old days. In Chapter V, Mr. Dorrit calls Amy to his quarters, and in front of Mrs. General, orders her to become a part of the family again, and become involved in society. When Mrs. General leaves the room, Dorrit tells Amy that she must, for his sake, put away the old days and behave like a woman of her position, as Fanny and Tip do. At breakfast, Frederick mentions that he and Amy encountered the Gowans on their trip to the art gallery the day before. Amy asks if she can call on Mrs. Gowan and renew their friendship. When the participants at breakfast confirm that the Gowans have money and position, permission is granted. Edward mentions that Mrs. Merdle's son, Sparkler, is in Venice and they spent the previous evening together. Frederick becomes angry at Fanny's attitude towards Amy and protests the way she is being treated. Fanny is much kinder to Amy for the rest of that day.

Book the Second, Chapters I-V Analysis

These chapters allow the author to regroup the characters in accordance with their new financial status. The Dorrits would never have merited the attention of the Gowans or



Merdles under ordinary circumstances. In the light of their wealth, Fanny, Tip and William see the world differently. Arthur is associated with the old days of poverty, therefore is to be avoided. By association with Arthur, Minnie is not welcome, but is restored to approval when it is discovered her husband has society connections.

For Amy, this is an upside down world and she is very unhappy. Her father is distant and she is no longer the center of his attention. Everyone wants her to change as they have, and when she does not, it creates resentment.

Mrs. General is another aptly named character who is an unbending governess and further reinforces the Dorrit family's determination to put miles between them and the prison. Mrs. General represents a very real threat to Amy's ability to retain her good and compassionate nature. Just as Amy conquered the darkness of prison, she must now fight to be true to herself while the rest of her family is caught up by bright lights and false people.

The shiny rich boy, Sparkler, is too dense to realize the object of his attention, Fanny, is the same girl his mother forbid him to see when she was an actress.

Attitudes shift as the Dorrit family navigates new circles of people and places with their new wealth and stature.



Book the Second, Chapters VI - VII

Book the Second, Chapters VI - VII Summary

In Chapter VI, Henry Gowan and Blandois spend time together, but Minnie dislikes the man. However, this is Gowan's way of asserting himself after Minnie's father paid all of his debts. Fanny accompanies Amy to visit Minnie one day, and Minnie takes them to Henry's painting studio. Blandois is there, acting as a model, and Minnie's dog Lion lunges at the villain. Henry makes the dog leave the room, but the girls are all shaken by the event. On the way home, Fanny hints to Amy that she is being courted by Sparkler. That evening he joins them for dinner, and when Dorrit realizes this relationship might give him introduction to the famous banker Merdle, he is ecstatic. Later that night, at the opera, Minnie tells Amy her dog has died of poisoning and she believes Blandois killed it. In Chapter VII, Fanny tells Amy she is considering marrying Sparkler, but Amy says she should not because she does not love him.

Book the Second, Chapters VI - VII Analysis

These chapters are important to the plot because they reinforce the evil presence of Blandois. Minnie does not like him, Amy is uncomfortable in his presence, and even the family dog attacks him for no obvious reason. Blandois poisons the dog, reminding the reader what sort of character he really is. Henry's purposeful inclusion of the villain into his household, just to make Minnie uncomfortable, tells the reader what kind of future poor Pet has in store with this man.

William Dorrit, now comfortable and wealthy, is unsatisfied with this situation and wants more. He wants his daughters to be the toast of society, and he wants to mingle with the rich men of England's society. Apparently, going from prisoner to world traveller is not enough. Fanny is making bad decisions as well, choosing a wealthy, brainless man as her mate simply to put herself in a position of power over Mrs. Merdle. These choices foreshadow trouble for the Dorrit family and create suspense for the reader at a time when the Dorrit family situation could easily become uninteresting.



Book the Second, Chapters VIII - XIII

Book the Second, Chapters VIII - XIII Summary

In Chapter VIII, Arthur convinces Daniel to allow him to tackle the Circumlocution Office in another attempt to obtain a license for Daniel's invention. Arthur's life then becomes a series of visits to that government office, visits to his mother's house, and visits to his friends the Meagles. On one visit to the Meagles household, Mrs. Gowan is there, and Arthur again is astonished at the woman's take on the marriage of Minnie and Henry. In Chapter IX, Mr. Meagles talks to Arthur about Mrs. Gowan. The Meagles have decided to go see their daughter in Italy. They ask Arthur to come to the house often to see to its management, and Arthur does this gladly. On one visit the servants tell him they thought they saw Tattycoram at the gate one evening. The next day Arthur sees the girl in London, in the company of a man. He follows Tattycoram, the strange man, and Miss Wade to Casby's house. He knocks on the door and sees Flora, who assumes the two women have been to see her father. When he is presented to Mr. Casby, Arthur asks about Miss Wade, but is essentially told nothing. Pancks enters at that moment, to have Casby sign some papers, and Arthur waits for the man outside the room. Pancks says Casby knows Wade and has for some time, and often gives her money from a trust fund. In Chapter X, Arthur then goes to his mother's house, and is astonished to see the same stranger who was with Miss Wade there. When he asks his mother about him, Mrs. Clennam says it is just business. Arthur leaves, disgusted. In Chapter XI, Little Dorrit writes a letter to Arthur, telling him that Minnie has a son, and although she still loves her husband, she is alone most of the time. Little Dorrit reports the Meagles are there with her now. Little Dorrit is not enjoying the travels as much as the rest of her family.

In Chapter XII, dinner is at Mr. Merdle's sumptuous table in London, with plenty of other rich men, Barnacles, and other professional men in attendance. At dinner, the subject of Dorrit and his newfound wealth has come up. Mr. Merdle tells the company that Mrs. Merdle's son Edmund Sparkler is interested in one of Dorrit's daughters. The next day, it is announced that Sparkler will become one of the lords of the Circumlocution office. In Chapter XIII, Mr. Merdle's reputation as a great man has spread far and wide, even to the Bleeding Heart Yard. Pancks has more difficulty than usual in collecting rents because the renters know Merdle does not really need the money. After his rounds, he stops in to see the Plornish family, who now have a nice shop on the corner, designed and provided by Little Dorrit. They observe John Baptist Cavalletto acting in a furtive manner and ask what he is doing. He tells them he is trying to avoid a very disagreeable man. Arthur invites Pancks to dinner and Pancks says he has invested some money in Mr. Merdle's company. Arthur begins to think of investing as well, considering the benefit of added funds to the home of Doyce and of his own mother.



Book the Second, Chapters VIII - XIII Analysis

These chapters introduce more mysteries. Arthur has never solved the secret he knows his father had, and now there is some connection between a stranger and his mother. This is the same stranger he saw with Miss Wade and Tattycoram, and that is another mystery.

Arthur continues battling windmills at the Circumlocution Office, and it entertains him while he investigates other mysteries.

Mr. Merdle's star is on the rise, and many of the characters are being affected by his wealth and stature. William Dorrit yearns to have his name linked with Merdle, and the mere mention of Sparkler by Merdle results in the man receiving a high position at the Circumlocution Office. Merdle is rich, powerful and mysterious. All of England wants a part of that, and even Pancks has decided the man's investments are worth tagging onto.

These chapters show the sway of power and the lure of money, even for someone as smart and decent as Arthur.

Cavalletto's behavior when he hears Blandois might be in town remind the reader that the villain is never far from the plot.



Book the Second, Chapters XIV - XVII

Book the Second, Chapters XIV - XVII Summary

In Chapter XIV, Amy and Fanny are talking about Sparkler's promotion and what it means to Fanny and her future. Amy does not want Fanny to marry Sparkler, because she knows Fanny does not love him. A few days later, Fanny and Sparkler are engaged. In Chapter XV, Mr. Dorrit is informed of the engagement, and he pays a visit to Mrs. Merdle to confirm her approval of the match. The wedding is spectacular, and Fanny and her husband return to England. William tells Amy that society demands she be the next one to marry. In Chapter XVI, Mr. and Mrs. Sparkler occupy the rooms in London previously used by Mrs. Merdle. Dorrit returns to his home in London as well, and is soon visited by the famous Mr. Merdle. Merdle invites Dorrit to dinner each evening of his stay, and asks if he can be of any further service. Dorrit asks Merdle to advise him regarding his money, and Merdle agrees to do so. Being related to Merdle, through Fanny's marriage, allows Dorrit unquestioned entrance into the society of London, and he is sought out by men of every profession and office. In Chapter XVII, Flora Finching pays a visit to Mr. Dorrit. She introduces herself as a former employer of Amy, and it is very distressing to Mr. Dorrit because it refers to their life previous to wealth. Flora tells Mr. Dorrit a Mr. Blandois has gone missing in London, and she entreats him to find the man. The police bill lists the complaint coming from Mrs. Clennam, so Dorrit goes to see her, but comes away with less information than he began.

Book the Second, Chapters XIV - XVII Analysis

These chapters are about the characters obtaining what they desire, even if the results may be disastrous. There is considerable foreshadowing that only ill can come of seeking power. Fanny marries Sparkler and returns to England to preside over society just as Mrs. Merdle is so fond of doing.

Amy's father is so enamored with Merdle and his reputation that he turns over his vast fortune to him. William Dorrit has completely forgotten the nature of his daughter Amy, and directs her to behave the same as Fanny. His manipulation of her feelings for him is shameless.

William Dorrit finally has what he feels he has always deserved. He has the ear of London society, his name is linked with one of the most powerful men in the world, he has money and the ability to go anywhere he wants; this is an extreme change of circumstances for a man who spent twenty years locked behind an iron gate, using tips from wealthy prisoners to make ends meet.

Amy's life is just getting more and more unhappy, with the departure of her sister into a loveless marriage, leaving her with the disagreeable Mrs. General and further removal from her own beloved father.



Book the Second, Chapters XVII - XIX

Book the Second, Chapters XVII - XIX Summary

In Chapter XVIII, Dorrit leaves the Merdle household from his farewell dinner and upon arriving at his hotel, finds John Chivery waiting for him, bringing cigars as he did long ago. Dorrit is mortified to be seen with him, and is quite rude to the young man. The next morning Dorrit leaves to return to Italy.

In Chapter XIX, Dorrit arrives at his Roman home quite late, and since he was not expected until tomorrow, he is not greeted by Amy. He finds the young woman sitting by the fire with his brother, conversing and comfortable. Amy advises that Mrs. Merdle is returning to London soon and they have been invited to her farewell dinner. Mr. Dorrit is behaving rather strangely, dropping off to sleep in the middle of conversations and staying in his quarters most of the day. At the Merdle dinner, Mr. Dorrit does not seem to know where he is anymore. Dorrit repeats his old speech from Marshalsea, asking for tributes, and the esteemed company at the dinner are thoroughly shocked. Amy is able to get him home. In the next hours he is the Father of Marshalsea in his mind again, and does not recognize anyone except Amy and his brother. For ten days he is like this, then he dies. Frederick dies very soon afterwards, from grief.

Book the Second, Chapters XVII - XIX Analysis

Dorrit reaches the pinnacle of his life, but it is too late. He will not live a long life enjoying his wealth, status and traveling the world. The scene that appears to instigate this decline is when William is ashamed to be seen with John Chivery, a young man he has known for years, who has come to bring him cigars and wish him well.

The life of poverty and deprivation have taken its toll on his health, and the years of pretending to be something he was not has damaged his brain. It is all just too much, and William falls ill and dies. At the end he returns to the loving father of Amy, and her faith is restored. Within the space of a month, Amy is completely alone. Fanny is in England, her father and uncle are dead, and Tip is ill in another part of Italy. Being the caregiver of the family, Amy rushes to her brother's side.

Suspense increases as the reader wonders what will happen to Amy now that her family is torn asunder.



Book the Second, Chapters XX - XXVI

Book the Second, Chapters XX - XXVI Summary

In Chapter XX, Arthur has traveled to Calais to find Blandois, and is at the apartment of Miss Wade and Harriett, formerly Tattycoram. They say they know nothing of Blandois' whereabouts. Miss Wade gives Arthur some sheets of paper, that she says will explain why she hates Blandois and hates Henry's wife, Minnie. Tattycoram asks about the Meagles, and this brings about an argument between the girl and Miss Wade. Arthur leaves in the middle of the argument and begins to read the papers given to him by Miss Wade. In Chapter XXI, the story of Miss Wade is revealed. Miss Wade has spent a life being rejected by the objects of her affections, and has developed the attitude that the world is against her. She was in love with Henry Gowan, but lost him to Minnie Meagle. Miss Wade lives on a small trust fund and spends her life being unhappy with her situation and revisiting old pains. When she meets Tattycoram, Miss Wade believes she has recognized another tortured soul, and takes her as a companion. In Chapter XXII, Daniel Doyce is called to an engineering job in another country. Arthur is speaking to Cavalletto at the farewell ceremony, and Arthur hears the little man whistling a song Arthur heard sung by Blandois. Arthur shows Cavalletto the police bill about Blandois and Cavalletto recognizes him as Rigaud, the murderer. Cavalletto then remembers he has seen the same man in London not long ago. Arthur asks Cavalletto to find out Rigaud's whereabouts as quickly as possible. In Chapter XXIII, Arthur informs his mother that Blandois is actually Rigaud and a murderer, but she does not believe him.

In Chapter XIV, Mr. Merdle's reputation soars and there is talk of making him a baron. Fanny resents the fact she must be in and therefore unable to attend the parties she loves. Mr. Merdle then arrives to see Fanny and Sparkler, but behaves strangely. He does not appear to have a reason to visit, and as he prepares to leave, he asks the Sparklers for a penknife, which they loan him.

In XXV, Merdle's doctor is reading in his room after dinner when he is called to the public bath to examine a body. The physician is shocked to find the body is that of Merdle, who has committed suicide with the penknife he borrowed from Fanny. Rumors soon fly, and the truth is soon known. Mr. Merdle was a thief and a forger, and worst of all, insolvent. In Chapter XXVI, Pancks rushes to see his friend Arthur, and confirms his worst fears, that Arthur has invested all of his money and that of Doyce and Clennam in Merdle's schemes. All three men have lost everything. Arthur tries to make reparation and save his partner's reputation, but in doing so, ends up as a prisoner in Marshalsea.

Book the Second, Chapters XX - XXVI Analysis

These chapters represent some tension release for the reader, as Arthur ends up entering the very prison he worked so hard to free the Dorrit family from. Merdle's

suicide rocks the country and the characters on every level, as Fanny unwittingly supplies the man with the weapon from her own wedding presents.

The mystery of Miss Wade's unhappiness is also solved, and a link is provided between Arthur and Henry by way of Miss Wade. The plot is a continuing link from one character to all the rest, making a web where the actions of one affects many others. This plot device gives the author methods of reinforcing characters and moving the plot in a creative and interesting manner.

Suspense builds as the reader wonders what will happen to the good man, Arthur, and to the fortunes of the others who had turned their money over to Merdle.



Book the Second, Chapters XXVII - XXXI

Book the Second, Chapters XXVII - XXXI Summary

In Chapter XXVII, Arthur sits in prison and thinks of the strength of Little Dorrit. John Chivery surprises Arthur by telling him that Little Dorrit has been in love with Arthur for many years now. Arthur feels ill and very old, and the prison is affecting him more than he realized it would. In Chapter XXVIII, Arthur receives a number of surprising visitors—one of the Barnacles, Arthur's lawyer and even Blandois, accompanied by Pancks and Cavalletto. Blandois asserts he is a welcome visitor to the Clennam household. Arthur sends for his mother, but Flintwinch arrives instead, with a letter from Clennam's mother telling him to mind his own business. Arthur is very depressed when everyone leaves. In Chapter XXIX, Clennam goes for days without seeing anyone, and not eating well, and thinks he is dreaming when he awakens one night to see Little Dorrit standing there next to him. She cares for him and brings him back to health. She tells him she wants to give him all of her money so he can be free from prison. He tells her he loves her, and just did not realize how much. In Chapter XXX, Rigaud goes to the Clennam house to collect his blackmail money from Mrs. Clennam. He tells her he now wants two thousand pounds for the documents, and she says she will not pay anything until she knows what it is. Rigaud is hinting and playing with words, but he soon makes Mrs. Clennam admit she is not Arthur's mother. A year after her disastrous marriage to Mr. Clennam, she found out there was another woman who was pregnant. Mrs. Clennam demanded the child and demanded that the two lovers never meet again. When Arthur's father dies, there is money left for the abandoned lover, but Mrs. Clennam decides to keep it. Rigaud says he has given Little Dorrit all the papers and if he is not paid by the time Marshalsea's doors are locked, the young lady will know the truth. Mrs. Clennam leaves the house, rushing to Marshalsea in order to keep these secrets. In Chapter XXXI, Mrs. Clennam goes to see Little Dorrit, and asks her to go with her back to the Clennam home to tell the man she knows the secret, so he will go away. As the two women go back, followed by Affery, who chased after them, the Clennam house explodes. Rigaud is killed, and Flintwinch's body is never found. Mrs. Clennam is struck dumb and spends the rest of her life in a wheelchair.

Book the Second, Chapters XXVII - XXXI Analysis

The end of the novel approaches as the villain Rigaud is killed, covered by the rubble of the home he tried to destroy. Mrs. Clennam uncharacteristically chooses to leave her self-created prison, and rush to the woman who loves her son for assistance. Amy recognizes another strong woman and joins her, ready to face the murdering Blandois without even realizing it is the same man she detested in Italy.

Symbolically, it is Amy Dorrit who returns life and hope to the prison, this time to save the man she loves. The love between Arthur and Amy has been hidden by Amy, and unrecognized by Arthur, but all those around them have known the truth for years.

Through everything, the two have built a friendship based on good works, similar attitudes towards life and their compassion for others.



Book the Second, Chapters XXXII - XXXIV

Book the Second, Chapters XXXII - XXXIV Summary

In Chapter XXXII, Pancks finally confronts Casby, shaming him in front of the renters of Bleeding Heart Yard. In Chapter XXXIII, Little Dorrit continues to nurse Arthur, and speaks with his friends about his condition. Tattycoram returns to London and asks the Meagles to take her back. The Meagles are happy to do so. Mr. Meagle tells Amy he cannot abide the thought of Arthur staying in this prison, so he will make sure he is free. In Chapter XXXIV, it is autumn, and Little Dorrit is reading to Arthur. Arthur is beginning to feel better, and has learned that he will soon be released from prison. Little Dorrit again offers to give him all of her fortune or half of it, and he refuses, knowing that he must part from her so she can have her position in society. Amy tells him Fanny's husband has lost his fortune because of Merdle, and so has Tip. Amy tells him she herself is as poor as she was when she was living in the prison those many years. The two are free to finally be in love with each other, and spend their lives together. One day she brings Mr. Meagles back to the prison, back from his adventures. He has found Daniel Doyce and the man rushes in to hug Arthur. Meagles and Doyce tell Arthur they have restored the business, and need Arthur to come back to work. That evening, Amy and Arthur are married, in the same church where Amy was christened.

Book the Second, Chapters XXXII - XXXIV Analysis

These chapters represent the denouement of the novel, where all is explained and revealed and, in a melodrama, where it is determined who lives happily ever after and who receives their just rewards.

Arthur is restored to health, physically, mentally, and financially, as his love and his friends come to support and aid him. His compassionate personality and good works in the past allow him to receive all the benefits of a happy man.

Little Dorrit, poor once again, is reunited with the Marshalsea prison she loved, and has a new man to care for, one who is appreciative and loving. She can freely love this man who, like her, cares more about people than wealth.

Doyce and Meagles are returned to England with great success and the Meagles get a new daughter in Tattycoram. Pancks gets revenge on the employer who did not appreciate him.



Characters

Amy Dorrit (Little Dorrit)

Amy Dorrit is also called Little Dorrit by the narrator and fondly by Arthur Clennam. She is a small woman, often mistaken for a child. Amy was born at Marshalsea prison, daughter of one of the prisoners. Her mother dies during her birth. Amy's father could not pay a substantial debt, was placed in the prison, and his family took up residence there as well. Amy has an older brother, Tip, and an older sister, Fanny.

As the years go on, Amy becomes famous locally as the girl born in the prison, and her kindness and compassion for others is well known throughout the prison and the local town. A giving and caring person, Amy is devoted to her father, and the various characters she picks up throughout her life. Amy is always thinking of others, finding work for her sister and brother, ensuring her father is warm and well fed, and staying in touch with her extended family and her friends outside the prison.

Amy is a good judge of character, a diligent worker, and knows herself well. Even though her stature is small, she has a big heart and is a strong individual.

The novel focuses on Amy as a child surrounded by people of misfortune, who retains a happy and positive outlook on life, charming all who know her. As she grows older, she takes over the family by sorting out work for her siblings, learning a trade so she can bring funds into the family and care for her father, and managing all aspects of the family's affairs. Amy's actions are unobtrusive, without requiring acknowledgement from others.

When Arthur returns from China, and is attempting to sort out his own life and future, he is instantly drawn to Amy. As he deals with his own trials and tribulations, Arthur constantly stays in contact with Amy.

Amy's life changes radically when Arthur's efforts on her behalf reveal a vast fortune for the Dorrit family and frees them all from the walls of Marshalsea Prison. The Dorrits embark on a world tour, and Amy realizes she prefers the comfortable prison surroundings to the glories of Italy. She is in marked contrast to the rest of her family, who revel in their newfound position and wealth.

Ironically, Amy is now considered the problem in the family rather than the caretaker, because she refuses to allow the wealth to convert her to a society darling. Amy is true to herself, and tries to find a place for herself in this new world. She misses Arthur and Maggy and Plornish.

Amy is the only one of the family who uses the money for good. She provides for her friends and enhances their quality of life. Amy continues to care for her father, even though his actions and attitudes about wealth draw him further away from her. When her



father becomes ill and is dying, the two of them regain their closeness. Amy is devastated when William dies, soon followed by Frederick.

When she learns of Arthur's imprisonment, Amy returns to the Marshalsea prison to care for him. She has long realized Arthur is the man she loves, even if he is considerably older than her. She has admired Minnie for being the subject of Arthur's love, and rather than be jealous, befriended the hapless Minnie.

As she nurses Arthur back to health, Amy is sought out by Mrs. Clennam, who knows Amy will do anything for the man she loves. Amy agrees to assist Mrs. Clennam in confronting Rigaud, and as the two women race back to see Rigaud, the house explodes and the horrible man is killed.

Amy learns that her father's poor choice of investments have left the entire Dorrit family penniless once again.

Finally Arthur realizes Amy is the woman he loves, and the two are married.

Arthur Clennam

Arthur Clennam is an Englishman who has spent the last twenty years assisting his father with the family business in China. When the reader meets him, he is in France, on his way home to England.

Arthur is a man in his mid-forties who has never married. He was once in love with Flora Casby, but she married another man. At the beginning of the novel, Arthur is a troubled man who knows his mother is hiding something from him. He becomes fascinated with a young woman named Amy Dorrit, and employs Pancks, an enterprising man, to do some research on her.

Arthur decides to turn the family business over to his mother's longtime employee, Jeremiah Flintwinch, and Arthur becomes the partner of a decent hardworking man named Daniel Doyce.

Arthur is a decent and respectful man who is concerned with justice. He is not afraid to tackle the omniscient Barnacles and the Office of Circumlocution. Arthur is always thinking of others, and is the perfect man for Amy, although he does not realize she is in love with him until the end of the novel.

As Arthur tries to rebuild his life, he entertains thoughts about Minnie Meagles as a possible wife, but Minnie is in love with Henry Gowan. Arthur decides against Flora as a wife, and turns to work for satisfaction.

At the same time that Arthur discovers that the Dorrit family is actually very wealthy, Arthur makes some bad investments that eventually land him in the same prison that contained the Dorrits.



Arthur begins to feel much older than his years and becomes ill. Amy returns to Marshalsea to nurse him, just as she did her father. As Arthur heals, he realizes Amy is the woman he loves and should marry.

Arthur's great friends Daniel and Meagles manage to free him from the debtors prison, get him back to work and provide him with the future to offer Amy as a husband.

Mrs. Clennam

Mrs. Clennam is the woman who raised Arthur, but is not his mother. She married his father and a year later discovered he had a pregnant mistress on the side. A very strong willed woman, she took the child from the mistress, and then banished her husband to China for the rest of their marriage. Mrs. Clennam becomes a very reserved, strict woman, who finds solace in the hellfire and brimstone portions of the Bible. As she grows older, she restricts herself emotionally and then physically, staying in one room of the musty old house for over a decade. Mrs. Clennam's role in the novel is to be the immovable force standing between Arthur and the answers about his childhood, relenting only when forced by blackmail by Rigaud. Instead of submitting to the threats of Rigaud, Mrs. Clennam turns to Little Dorrit for assistance in keeping Arthur's name intact.

Mr. Meagles

Mr. Meagles is an expansive, friendly man who travels the world with his family, blissfully ignorant of any need to blend into the local culture or acknowledge there is another language besides English. Meagles' love for his country is surpassed by his love for his daughter, Pet. Meagles represents the type of wealthy Englishman who is amusing and charming, not interested in power but in love. Meagles serves as a problem solver to bring Arthur and Daniel together, to free Arthur from prison, and to finally become a father to Tattycoram again.

Minnie Meagles

Minnie is also known as Pet, mainly because she is the object of much affection by her parents. She was born a twin, but her sister died as a toddler, and the parents bestowed all of their love, attention and wealth upon her. Minnie is not spoiled, but naïve, and makes an unfortunate choice in husbands. Long courted by the troubled but wealthy Henry Gowan, she finally agrees to marry him and they move to Italy. She has a child there, and her parents come to be with her.

Jeremiah Flintwinch

Jeremiah is a longtime employee of the Clennam family, and when Arthur declines to take his place at the head of the business when he returns from China, Jeremiah takes



over. The family business does well under his care, but there are many secrets that he keeps. Flintwinch is married to Affery, but it is a marriage of convenience only, as she was already living in the Clennam household. Jeremiah is a twin, but his brother is only briefly involved in the plot. Jeremiah is thought to have been killed in the explosion of the Clennam household, but actually escaped to book passage on a ship leaving England.

Daniel Doyce

Daniel is a hardworking man who spends over a dozen years attempting to bring an invention to the British public. His attempts bring him to the Office of Circumlocution, where his patent application stalls forever. Daniel finds a valuable business partner and loyal friend in Arthur Clennam, and the two men build a business together.

Affery Flintwinch

Affery is the wife of Jeremiah and a longtime maid to Mrs. Clennam. Affery is as weak a woman as Mrs. Clennam is strong. She is so accustomed to obeying the commands of her husband and of Mrs. Clennam that she can no longer tell the difference between reality and dreams. Affery's solution is to spend most of her day with her apron over her face and head. Affery's role in the novel is to serve as a witness to some of the plot and for comic relief.

Rigaud (Blandois)

Rigaud is the villain of the novel. Originally imprisoned in France for tossing his wife over a cliff, he escapes and assumes many identities to retain his freedom. His travels and manipulations touch every character in the novel. He comes and goes throughout the novel, always scheming, always deceiving, until he comes upon a plan to blackmail Mrs. Clennam over the truth of Arthur's birth. Rigaud meets his well deserved death in an explosion at the Clennam household.

Maggy

Maggy is a woman in her twenties who suffered an illness at ten years of age and never progressed mentally beyond that age. Maggy serves as an example of the kindness and compassion of Little Dorrit.

Fanny and Tip Dorrit

Fanny and Tip are Little Dorrit's older brother and sister. These two characters go through the novel depending upon and manipulating Little Dorrit, whether the family is wealthy or destitute. Fanny and Tip shape their lives to fit the circumstances, and throw



themselves totally into whatever is required. Fanny, with the assistance of Amy, becomes an actress when they are poor; when they become rich, she uses that acting ability to catch a rich but stupid husband. Tip cannot keep any job Amy arranges for him, and ends up in the debtor prison Amy worked so hard to free him from; when wealthy, he spends freely and begins the life of a rich but useless aristocrat. Neither of Amy's siblings ever truly come to appreciate the kindness and love given so freely by Amy.

William Dorrit

William Dorrit is the father of Amy, Fanny and Tip. His wife dies giving birth to Amy, and William spends the next two decades living at Marshalsea, a prison for people who cannot pay their debts. He becomes a fixture at the prison, staying on when other prisoners are released. With no hope for ever gaining his freedom, William becomes a trusted prisoner and eventually takes over the prison. William never quite accepts the reality of his imprisonment, and leans heavily on his daughter Amy to care for him and maintain his routines. When the family's wealth is discovered, William seems intent on pretending the twenty-odd years he spent in Marshalsea never happened, and when anything happens that reminds him or his family of the imprisonment, he is angry and refutes it. Even Arthur, the man who brings the story of the wealth to the Dorrit family, is considered someone repulsive. William eventually returns to the role of Father of Marshalsea, at the end of his life, when his mind and health are going. He dies in Italy, surrounded by luxury and wealth, but never attaining the simple happiness of being cared for by Little Dorrit within the Marshalsea prison walls.

Frederick Dorrit

Frederick Dorrit is an unusual character, and is William's brother. A musician by trade, Frederick spends his life in a small apartment and walks around town in old clothes and without bathing until suddenly being elevated to William's entourage touring Europe. Frederick is a staunch champion of Little Dorrit, and sees the reality William refuses to accept.

Flora Finching

Flora is Casby's daughter, and was at one time Arthur's love. Flora's family did not approve of Arthur as a suitor for their daughter, so she married an older man named Finching, who died. When Arthur returns from China, Flora sets her sights on her old boyfriend, but her nonstop chatter and lack of personality soon deter him. Flora's role in the novel is to provide background and comic relief, especially when she is accompanied by her late husband's aunt, who is clearly insane.



Objects/Places

Marshalsea Prison

This is a prison in England where people are held until they or their families can satisfy their debts. Marshalsea is where William Dorrit is held for over twenty years. It is common for the prisoner's families to join them behind the walls to live until the debt is paid. This prison is where Amy is born and lives the majority of her life, until the discovery of the family's wealth. Amy has difficulty imagining a life outside these walls, and a life where guards, or turnkeys did not lock the doors at night. The prison has high walls with spikes on top, and the gates are iron-plated and guarded. There is a narrow garden. The prison is in a town, near the Church of St. George. At any given time there are dozens of prisoners and their families within the walls. Family members, tradesmen, and various sellers come and go freely during the day, and a whistle sounds just before the gates close each night to clear the grounds of non-prisoners.

Clennam Household

The house is located in the same town as the prison and is very old. Whereas it was once a large and beautiful house, it has suffered from lack of upkeep in recent years. There are many rooms unused, and the furniture has turned shabby and musty. This house is what Mrs. Clennam has chosen for her own self-made prison. Arthur spends the first twenty years of his life in this house, but when he returns from China he finds it so oppressive he cannot spend more than one night behind its walls.

Italy

Italy is a country in Europe, and symbolizes a land where the idle rich go for their leisure when England becomes too cold and rainy. Mrs. Merdle spends entire seasons in Italy, and when Henry and Minnie are married, they chose Italy as a land where Henry can excel at pursuing the art of painting. The Dorrit family chooses Italy for their first serious excursion once their wealth is discovered.

Office of Circumlocution

This is a fictitious department in the British government. The author uses this office, and its main office holders the Barnacles, to express his opinion about the slow pace of government business. In the Office of Circumlocution, projects disappear and the people who go in search of them are never heard of again. It is described as the place where people are taught how not to do it, rather than how to do it.



Bleeding Heart Yard

This is a low rent area of town, with some stores and manufacturing shops, but mostly very poor people who have difficulty making ends meet. This is the home base of Plornish, Cavaletto, John Handy, and many other characters in the story. This Yard symbolizes the regular working man of the British empire at the time of the story, working long hours but never getting ahead.

Quarantine in France

When travellers attempt to enter France via Marseilles from a journey of the East, they are required to spend some time in a quarantine area, in order to prevent the spread of plague. The author uses this quarantine area to introduce Miss Wade, the Meagles, Tattycoram, and Arthur Clennam to the story and to one another.

Miss Wade's Home

Whether at her home in England or in Calais, Miss Wade's home is a direct reflection of her personality. The decor is exotic but crowded, with no direction or purpose or comfort.

Clennam Portrait

In the Clennam home, there is a large portrait of Arthur's father, and it is often speculated upon by visitors and by Arthur.

Clennam Desk

Mrs. Clennam conducts her entire life from her bedroom and sitting area. She maintains a desk in this room, and when someone is sitting at the desk beside her, the conversation is somewhat private. This is symbolic of Mrs. Clennam compartmentalizing her life.

Affery's Apron

Affery wears a full apron as part of her work uniform, and has done so for years. When confronted with strange dreams and unusual circumstances, the poor Affery pulls the skirt of the apron over her face for protection. In the days when Jeremiah is the most active, and before the house explodes, Affery leaves the apron over her head constantly, even answering the door with it over her face.

Gold Watch

Arthur's father gave him his watch just before he died, with strict instructions to deliver it to Mrs. Clennam when Arthur returned from China. It is inscribed "Do Not Forget", and although it appears to be a term of endearment, asking his wife not to forget him, Mrs. Clennam knows its true meaning is for her not to forget her commitment to raise Arthur as her own child.



Themes

Money does not buy happiness

In the novel *Little Dorrit*, the author's primary theme is that a level of money and wealth does not necessarily equate to a person's level of happiness and comfort. His characters Amy Dorrit and Arthur Clennam are basically good, compassionate people who care more for the comfort of their friends and their duty to others than they do about acquiring wealth and status. Neither of these characters quail in the time of crisis, or fail to rise to the defense and support of their friends. Arthur could have taken his father's business and become rich, but he is too troubled by the possibility of a family secret to follow that route. Amy Dorrit finds contentment in a prison, surrounded by her family and doing good deeds. When she finds herself rich beyond imagination, Amy misses the important things in life and is not satisfied with the pleasure of new wardrobes or jewelry. Amy stays true to herself.

Mr. and Mrs. Merdle are replete with money and power, but their marriage is like two ships passing in the night. Mrs. Merdle's control over Society, her concerns over propriety and her condescending attitude reveal a shallow soul. Mr. Merdle is a swindler who commits suicide.

Mr. and Mrs. Meagle, on the other hand, make no show of their wealth and seek no power or manipulating devices.

Henry Gowan's family connections and his marriage to Minnie make him wealthy, but he continues to be an unhappy person, and to make those around him unhappy.

Rigaud commits murder and blackmail in pursuit of money, but his character prevents him from ever being truly happy as his desires are for material things.

The author reinforces his theme throughout the novel by killing off or impoverishing those characters who love money, and rewarding the compassionate characters with happy marriages and satisfying lives.

Man vs Society

The author believes society is a force of its own, even requiring capitalization of the word when used in some chapters of his novel. Society in this novel consists of swindling bankers, morally corrupt, wealthy young men and women who believe themselves to be far better than their fellow citizens.

The people in these Society circles dress well, spend their time eating dinner at the expense of Mr. Merdle, consult Mrs. Merdle about how to conduct their lives, and do what must be done to maintain their positions. This atmosphere is ripe for a man of Merdle's inclinations to achieve and gain power over the fortunes of others.



William Dorrit falls from society's graces by neglecting to pay his bills, and spends most of his life in prison because of it. Instead of resenting what has happened, Dorrit is eager to return to the folds of society, sacrificing the companionship of his daughter Amy, allowing his other daughter Fanny to enter a loveless marriage, and giving his money to a scoundrel like Merdle instead of helping others with his newfound wealth.

The characters who shun society are rewarded in this novel by a happy marriage and a good long life. Those who seek Society are not given pleasant outcomes, as Fanny is stuck with a poor government fool for a husband.

Amy and Arthur are steadfast in their concerns for people over status, and end up together. Minnie is raised by a family unconcerned with Society, but chooses badly, and ends up forgotten by the author when he is wrapping up the stories of all of the characters.

Sarcasm in Literature

The author uses the story to advance his thoughts on the cumbersome British government, dedication to Society, the injustice of a debtors prison, and the folly of delusions of grandeur.

In this novel, Dickens continues his penchant for unusual and highly descriptive character and place names. The Barnacles in the Office of Circumlocution, Sparkler the dimwitted bridegroom, and the unfortunate occupants of Bleeding Heart Yard, are examples.

The author achieves several goals with these obvious titles. By having Arthur butt his head against the solid Office of Circumlocution, the author warns the reader this is a futile waste of time, but also highlights the stubborn and heroic nature of his character in a way that dialogue and description would not. When the reader learns Arthur is headed with Doyce to the Bleeding Heart Yard, there is no question as to what sort of people will be living there.

The author has a very clear plot line of cause and effect with his opinions, and uses sarcasm to drive home his points. The Barnacles are attached to the government just as barnacles are attached underwater to ill-maintained boats and piers. Tackling them head on will not provide results, but a circuitious route will. The injustice of imprisoning people who cannot pay their debts and therefore removing them from any ability to pay their debts is highlighted by the poor Dorrit family being marooned there for decades.

The author's views on Society and its population of colorful and useless birds is evident as he compares Mrs. Merdle to a large parrot.

William Dorrit is the best example of being subject to delusions of grandeur. The author sarcastically has William recommending his brother be more like him, and directing Amy to be more like Fanny. William shuns the poor John Chivery and it is the final straw, as William soon falls sick and dies.

Sarcasm in literature is a powerful force to convey a message.

Style

Point of View

The novel is told by an omniscient narrator, who is aware of all characters, their location and attitudes. The narrator is reliable. This point of view allows the reader to share the information gained by the narrator, and to be present for all important dialogue and action. The majority of the plot movement takes place in the company of either Little Dorrit or Arthur, but some chapters involve the villain Rigaud.

Without this point of view, it would be difficult for the readers to tie all the characters together, or for the plot to be so detailed. The author has introduced characters of a wide variety of socio-economic situations who are affected by the actions of Little Dorrit, Arthur and Rigaud, but it would be impossible for the reader to perceive this interaction without the use of the omniscient narrator point of view.

Setting

Little Dorrit is a novel set in the mid-1800s, in Europe. The novel begins in France, then moves to England, then Italy, then back to England.

Most of the plot and dialogue occurs at a debtors prison in England. This location sets the mood and tone of a restricted, spare existence, with cold, hard walls and a group of people set aside from the rest of civilization by an iron gate. The character of Little Dorrit has the ability to bring sunshine and warmth to this gray world, and the comfort she provides as a friend and a devoted daughter makes Marshalsea Prison a home.

The country of France is used for the prison that fails to hold Rigaud, and as the location for Miss Wade's escape from England.

Italy represents untold wealth, vast expanses, and a destination for wealthy and bored English aristocrats.

The countries other than England are filled with scenery and flat, stereotypical characters. England's fog, drizzle and crumbling buildings are described lovingly by the author, and England is the land where all of the characters long to be.

The author uses the setting to create a mood for each character and each scene. Little Dorrit and her father are usually conversing in their worn but comfortable quarters, by a fireplace, with soup or tea by their side. Mrs. Clennam, an aloof, reserved and religiously strict woman is housed in a dark musty old home. Even when Mrs. Clennam dines on oysters, the atmosphere is dank and unwelcoming.

The author also draws distinctions between the opulent coldness of the Merdle home with the open and airy estate of the friendly Meagles clan.



Language and Meaning

Little Dorrit is written by Charles Dickens, a beloved English author who is well known for his creative character names. The Barnacle family is the most noticeable in this story, as these government workers greatly resemble the unseen, immovable creatures who attach themselves to piers and boat bottoms.

This story is character driven, and is paced to keep the reader's attention and sympathy for each of the main characters. The novel is about a group of people and what happens to them as they interact when secrets are revealed. The villains remain villainous and despicable throughout the story, and the good characters remain good.

The author's characters use the language expected of their social and economic standing. The author does not use accents for the uneducated or unsophisticated characters, but uses different subject matters for them instead.

Although the novel was set and written in the mid-1800s, the subjects and references are applicable to the modern world. The author speaks directly, and the plot moves along at a brisk pace, with only enough description to set the scene for the reader.

The author has a considerable vocabulary, and uses it well. Multi-syllabic words are used correctly and enhance the story.

Structure

Little Dorrit is a novel, and the story itself consists of 845 pages. There is a preface from the author. Also included in the novel are 125 pages of notes, appendices, and maps.

The novel is in two parts: "Book the First: Poverty," and "Book the Second: Riches." "Book the First" has 36 chapters, and "Book the Second" has 34 chapters, which results in 70 chapters overall. Each chapter is numbered with Roman numerals and titled. Most of the titles are humorous summaries of the chapter.

"Book the First" tells the story of the Dorrit family before the discovery of their inheritance, and "Book the Second" tells the story of their actions during the wealthy period and how they came to lose everything and become poor once again.

The story is arranged in chronological order, in an easy to understand manner. There is only one flashback chapter and no premonition scenes. The plot moves smoothly, dwelling mainly on the activities of Little Dorrit, Arthur, or Rigaud, and brings them all together for a reasonable and expected conflict resolution after sufficient character building.

The novel is a standard period love story, with no subplots. It was written expressly to be serialized in a London newspaper, with sections designed to encourage the reader to

purchase a newspaper for the next installment. Its cadence is comfortable and well executed by the author.



Quotes

Part One, Chapter I, Page 26, Rigaud:

"When a wife's relations interpose against a husband who is a gentleman, who is proud, and who must govern, the consequences are inimicable to peace."

Part One, Chapter II, Page 39, Miss Wade:

"In our course through life we shall meet the people who are coming to meet us, from many strange places and by many strange roads" was the composed reply; "and what it is set to us to do to them, and what it is set to them to do to us, will all be done."

Part One, Chapter VII, Page 88, Amy Dorrit:

"Nothing—whatever it is—seems to have done anybody much good who comes here," she returned with all simplicity. "But I want to learn all the same."

Part One, Chapter IX, Page 111, Narrator:

Little Dorrit seemed the least, the quietest, and weakest of Heaven's creatures.

Part One, Chapter XII, Page 152, Narrator concerning Plornish:

He was one of those many wayfarers on the road of life, who seem to be afflicted with supernatural corns, rendering it impossible for them to keep up even with their lame competitors.

Part One, Chapter XIX, Page 241, Narrator concerning William Dorrit:

But it was many years ago; and now he was like a passenger aboard a ship in a long voyage, who has recovered from sea-sickness, and is impatient of that weakness in the fresher passengers taken aboard at the last port.

Part One, Chapter XX, Page 264, Fanny:

"So kiss me once again, Amy dear, and we will agree that we may both be right, and that you are a tranquil, domestic, home-loving good girl!"

Part One, Chapter XXII, Page 284, Daniel:

"And I may avow, Mr. Clennam," said he, with a cordial shake of the hand, "that if I had looked high and low for a partner, I believe I could not have found one more to my mind."

Part One, Chapter XXVII, Page 339, Narrator regarding Arthur Clennam:

As the fierce dark teaching of his childhood had never sunk into his heart, so the first article in the code of morals was, that he must begin, in practical humility, with looking well to his feet on Earth, and that he could never mount on wings of words to Heaven.

Part One, Chapter XXXIII, Page 412, Narrator:

Mrs. Merdle was at home, and was in her nest of crimson and gold, with the parrot on a



neighboring stem watching her with his head to one side, as if he took her for another splendid parrot of a larger species.

Part One, Chapter XXXIV, Page 423, Daniel Doyce:

"For," said he, "as my business with this set of gentlemen was to do a public duty and a public service, and as their business with me was to prevent it by wringing my soul out, I think we had better not eat and drink together with a show of being of one mind."

Part Two, Chapter V, Page 501, Mrs. General:

"Apart from such a habit standing in the way of that graceful equanimity of surface which is so expressive of good breeding, it hardly seems compatible with refinement of mind. A truly refined mind will seem to be ignorant of the existence of anything that is not perfectly proper, placid, and pleasant."

Part Two, Chapter VI, page 536, Narrator:

A perfect fury for making acquaintances on whom to impress their riches and importance, had seized the House of Dorrit.

Part Two, Chapter XI, Page 577, Amy Dorrit:

"When I have heard him talking to Papa during the sittings for the picture, I have sat wondering whether it could be that he has no belief in anybody else, because he has no belief in himself."



Topics for Discussion

What is the purpose of the Office of Circumlocution? Do they achieve their purpose? How?

Compare the characters of Amy Dorrit and her sister Fanny. What made these two women so different?

Are Miss Wade and Tattycoram similarly unhappy souls? What made Tattycoram go back to the Meagles?

Examine the character, personality and actions of Rigaud. Is there a moment in the novel when he is not behaving like a villain? Why or why not?

Why is the secret of Arthur's birth so important to Mr. and Mrs. Clennam that it was kept for over forty years and worthy of blackmail?

Which, if any, of the characters change in the novel? How do they change, and what causes this change? If you determine none of them changed, why do you think the author chose not to change them?

How much did the setting of mid-19th century England affect the characters and their actions in this story? Could any of this happen in modern times? What adjustments in the story would need to be made?

Compare the characters of Amy Dorrit and Minnie Meagles. Which would have made the best choice for Arthur as a wife?

What are the roles of Flora, Henry Gowan, Tip, and Mrs. General in the novel? Are they necessary?

Create a connection grid for each character in the novel, drawing a line from each to the other as the connection is found. Is anyone totally unconnected from the rest, or only by one other person? Discuss how this interweaving of characters enhances or hinders the plot.