

# **Our Mutual Friend Study Guide**

## **Our Mutual Friend by Charles Dickens**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Our Mutual Friend Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Book One, The Cup and The Lip; Chapter 1, On the Look Out; Chapter 2, The Man From Somewhere; Chapter 3, Another Man; and Chapter 4, The R. Wilfer Family.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5, Boffin's Bower; Chapter 6, Cut Adrift; Chapter 7, Mr. Wegg Looks after Himself; and Chapter 8, Mr. Boffin in Consultation.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin in Consultation; Chapter 10, A Marriage Contract; Chapter 11, Podsnappery; and Chapter 12, The Sweat of an Honest Man's Brow.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 13, Tracking the Bird of Prey; Chapter 14, The Bird of Prey Brought Down; Chapter 15, Two New Servants; Chapter 16, Minders and Re-minders; Chapter 17, A Dismal Swamp.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Book Two, Birds of a Feather: Chapter 1, Of an Educational Character, Chapter 2, Still Educational; Chapter 3, A Piece of Work; and Chapter 4, Cupid Prompted.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5, Mercury Prompting; Chapter 6, A Riddle without an Answer; Chapter 7, In Which a Friendly Move is Originated; and Chapter 8, In Which an Innocent Elopement Occurs.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9, In Which the Orphan Makes his Will; Chapter 10, A Successor; Chapter 11, Some Affairs of the Heart; and Chapter 12, More Birds of Prey.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 13, A Solo and a Duett; Chapter 14, Strong of Purpose; and Chapter 15, The Whole Case So Far.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 16, An Anniversary Occasion; Book 3, A Long Lane: Chapter 1, Lodgers in Queer Street; Chapter 2, A Respected Friend in a New Aspect; Chapter 3, The Same Respected Friend in More Aspects than One; and Chapter 4, A Happy Return of the Day.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5, The Golden Dustman Falls into Bad Company; Chapter 6, The Golden Dustman Falls into Worse Company; Chapter 7, The Friendly Move takes up a Strong Position; Chapter 8, The End of a Long Journey; and Chapter 9, Somebody Becomes the Subject of a P.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 10, Scouts Out; Chapter 11, In the Dark; Chapter 12, Meaning Mischief; and Chapter 13, Give a Dog a Bad Name, and Hang Him.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 14, Mr. Wegg Prepares a Grindstone for Mr. Boffin's Nose; Chapter 15, The Golden Dustman at his Worst; Chapter 16, The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins; and Chapter 17, A Social Chorus.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>

<a href="#"><u>Book Four, A Turning: Chapter 1, Setting Traps; Chapter 2, The Golden Dustman Rises a Little; Chapter 3, The Golden Dustman Sinks Again; and Chapter 4, A Runaway Match.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>29</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Chapter 5, Concerning the Mendicant's Bride; Chapter 6, A Cry for Help; Chapter 7, Better to be Abel than Cain; and Chapter 8, A Few Grains of Pepper.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>31</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Chapter 9, Two Places Vacated; Chapter 10, The Dolls' Dressmaker Discovers A Word; Chapter 11, Effect is Given to the Dolls' Dressmaker's Discovery; Chapter 12, The Passing Shadow; and Chapter 13, Showing how the Golden Dustman Helped to Scatter Dust.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>33</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Chapter 14, Checkmate to the Friendly Move; Chapter 15, What was Caught in the Traps that were Set; Chapter 16, Persons and Things in General; Chapter 17, The Voice of Society; and Postscript, In Lieu of Preface.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>35</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Characters.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>37</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Objects/Places.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>42</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Themes.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>44</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Style.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>46</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Quotes.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>48</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Topics for Discussion.....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>52</u></a>

# Plot Summary

Our Mutual Friend is a fiction novel by Charles Dickens. It begins with a man, Jesse Hexam, who along with his daughter, Lizzie, finds a body in the Thames River. Lizzie is scared but her father warns her to be brave. They meet a man on the river named Rogue Riderhood but Hexam is not kind to him. The body is identified as a man named John Harmon, who was coming home to claim his inheritance. He was supposed to inherit his father's estate, as long as he married Bella Wilfer. A man named Julius Handford comes to look at the body but later disappears. After his death, two servants Noddy and Henrietta Boffin inherit the Bower estate. A mysterious man named John Rokesmith applies to be their secretary. Noddy Boffin hires a man named Silas Wegg to teach him to read but Wegg is only concerned with finding a way to make a profit off of their association. Two men, a school teacher named Bradley Headstone and a lawyer named Eugene Wrayburn, both fall in love with Lizzie Hexam. However, Headstone's affection scares Lizzie and she flees the area. Bella Wilfer, the girl who was supposed to marry John Hexam, is taken in by the Boffins and learns to like the rich life.

Silas Wegg finds a will that gives the Bower estate to the government, and plans to blackmail Noddy Boffin with this. However, there is a later will that does leave the estate to the Boffins, which Noddy had hid so as not to give John Harmon a bad name. When Wegg tries to get money off of Boffin and order him around, Wegg is thrown out and humiliated. John Rokesmith is fired by Noddy Boffin for his love of Bella. Boffin has begun to get more miserly, but this is all part of a charade to show Bella Wilfer that money is not everything. Bella marries Rokesmith because she loves him, and he eventually reveals that he is John Harmon. Bella's father, Mr. Wilfer, is relieved his daughter has learned her lesson and married for love. The Harmons and the Boffins will live together at the Bower. Bradley Headstone is very jealous of Eugene Wrayburn over Lizzie Hexam and eventually attacks him, leaving him for dead. However, Lizzie finds Eugene and nurses him back to health. Bradley drowns while fighting with Rogue Riderhood, who knows Headstone attacked Wrayburn. Riderhood had tried to blackmail Headstone. Lizzie and Eugene get married, and Eugene decides not to finger Headstone as the man who attacked him. The couple lives happily despite their differences in social status.



# **Book One, The Cup and The Lip; Chapter 1, On the Look Out; Chapter 2, The Man From Somewhere; Chapter 3, Another Man; and Chapter 4, The R. Wilfer Family**

## **Book One, The Cup and The Lip; Chapter 1, On the Look Out; Chapter 2, The Man From Somewhere; Chapter 3, Another Man; and Chapter 4, The R. Wilfer Family Summary**

A man, Jessie Hexam or the Gaffer, and his daughter, Lizzie Hexam, are floating in a boat on the Thames River in London, near the London Bridge, in May 1864. They are scouring the river for something. Her father reaches into the river and pulls out some money. He tells her to switch places with him, and she's afraid to sit near something in the boat. Her father chides her for being thankless when the river has given them their livelihood.

In Chapter 2, Mr. and Mrs. Veneering are a married couple living in a new house in London, and are friends with Melvin Twemlow. They are having a dinner party, however it is clear the guests do not really know much about each other as a couple mistakes Twemlow for Mr. Veneering. Their lawyer, Mortimer Lightwood, begins talking about a man from Jamaica, a rascal who is the only son of a rich man. After the rich father dies, the man would inherit all, if he marries a certain girl. Lightwood receives a note just then, saying that the man has drowned.

In Chapter 3, Lightwood goes to see the boy who sent the message. The boy is Charley Hexam, the son of Jesse Hexam, who found the body. Mortimer and his friend, Eugene Wrayburn, arrive at Hexam's, and Jesse tells them he's contacted the police. Lightwood notices the dead man had no money, and Jesse says that's common. A stranger, Julius Handford, comes in and says he may know the body, although when they go to see it he says he doesn't and leaves. Mortimer Lightwood makes the details of the case public, and the dead man's name, John Harmon. The jury declares the death suspicious and offers a reward for information, including about Handford since no one has seen him since he came to view the body.

In Chapter 4, Mr. Wilfer is a clerk on the docks, working for the firm of Chicksey, Veneering and Stobbles. Their daughter, Bella Wilfer, is the woman John Harmon was supposed to marry and is very upset she will not be able to marry a rich man. A man comes, and Mrs. Wilfer introduces him as a man who rented a room from them, John

Rokesmith. Reginald Wilfer tells Bella he has no idea why she was chosen to marry John Harmon. It is revealed that John Rokesmith is the man who presented himself as Julius Handford to the police.

## **Book One, The Cup and The Lip; Chapter 1, On the Look Out; Chapter 2, The Man From Somewhere; Chapter 3, Another Man; and Chapter 4, The R. Wilfer Family Analysis**

The novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, by Charles Dickens, begins with a mystery. A body is found floating in the river, with no identification. The body has no money on it, but this is because Gaffer Hexam feels it is his right to take money from the bodies found in the Thames river. The body is identified as John Harmon, the son of the elder John Harmon who has recently died. John Harmon would have inherited his father's money, as long as he married Bella Wilfer. A strange man, named Julius Handford, also appears on the scene. He later identifies himself as John Rokesmith, indicating the man may have a secret to hide. He may have something to do with John Harmon's death. The novel also gives us a glimpse of how people of different social classes live at the time. Most of the upper class seem to be more concerned with appearances than anything of depth, like the Veneerings. Humble families like the Wilfers and Hexams may be much more close-knit, although they still have their squabbles. Bella Wilfer, in particular, is vain and angry she doesn't get to marry a rich man. She places a great value on money and thinks it is the secret to happiness.



# **Chapter 5, Boffin's Bower; Chapter 6, Cut Adrift; Chapter 7, Mr. Wegg Looks after Himself; and Chapter 8, Mr. Boffin in Consultation**

## **Chapter 5, Boffin's Bower; Chapter 6, Cut Adrift; Chapter 7, Mr. Wegg Looks after Himself; and Chapter 8, Mr. Boffin in Consultation Summary**

In June 1864, a man named Silas Wegg, who has a wooden leg, sets up a small shop out of a box and wood on a London corner. He only sells gingerbread. A man comes to him and bothers him, saying his name is Noddy Boffin. Wegg has seen Boffin go by before, and Boffin asks him about it. Boffin says he is impressed Wegg can read, because he can't. He offers Wegg money to come and teach him how to read. He tells him to come to his home, Boffin's Bower. Wegg goes and meets Henrietta Boffin, Noddy Boffin's wife. Wegg begins to teach Boffin to read.

In Chapter 6, at a tavern called the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, Miss Abbey Potterson, the manager, berates a customer she is taken against, Mr. Rogue Riderhood. She tells the man she will not be kind to him because he does not have the respectability of the Gaffer. Miss Potterson only lets the men drink as much as their wives will let them. She speaks to Lizzie Hexam about how many times she's offered to help her break away from the family business. She tells Lizzie that rumor says her father helps hasten the deaths of those he finds in the river. Lizzie returns home and helps her brother, Charley, leave to further his education. She tells her father, who is upset.

In Chapter 7, Silas Wegg is enjoying his job at the Boffins. He visits a shop, and talks about his amputation with Mr. Venus, the shopkeeper. A boy comes in, and Mr. Venus sells him a taxidermy canary. They discuss John Harmon's death. (Chapter 8, Mr. Boffin in Consultation) In July 1864, Mr. Noddy Boffin goes to see the Mortimer Lightwood. While waiting, he talks to his clerk and gives him some money to help him with his life. Lightwood arrives and tells Boffin that he and his wife will have no problem collecting their inheritance, which fell to them after John Harmon was found dead. They talk about John Harmon, and Boffin says he and his wife hadn't seen the boy since he was very small. Lightwood prepares to prepare wills for the Boffins and Mr. Boffin says his wife will be able to dispose of hers however she likes. When Mr. Boffin leaves, John Rokesmith approaches and asks him if he needs a secretary. He promises to come see Boffin in a week.



## **Chapter 5, Boffin's Bower; Chapter 6, Cut Adrift; Chapter 7, Mr. Wegg Looks after Himself; and Chapter 8, Mr. Boffin in Consultation Analysis**

Noddy Boffin is the recipient of the Bower, the estate that John Harmon Sr. had planned to leave to his son, John Harmon. The Boffins worked for the Harmon family, and now found that their diligence has been rewarded. Noddy Boffin, however, feels that as a rich man, he should also be an educated man. He finds a tutor, Silas Wegg, to teach him how to read. The mysterious John Rokesmith comes to Boffin in search of a job. It is unclear why he wants to work for the man. Boffin also proves himself to be a fair man, drawing up a separate will for his wife so she can do what she likes with her money. Rogue Riderhood, a shameful man, is an acquaintance of Jesse Hexam, although he is not a friend of the family. He begins a rumor that Jesse Hexam kills and men he finds in the river if they aren't completely dead, to collect money from them. Lizze and her family are very upset to learn about this. Lizzie also helps her brother, Charley, and leaves to get an education, which is something her father does not approve of. He thinks that what's good enough for him is good enough for his son.



## **Chapter 9, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin in Consultation; Chapter 10, A Marriage Contract; Chapter 11, Podsnappery; and Chapter 12, The Sweat of an Honest Man's Brow**

### **Chapter 9, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin in Consultation; Chapter 10, A Marriage Contract; Chapter 11, Podsnappery; and Chapter 12, The Sweat of an Honest Man's Brow Summary**

Mr. Noddy Boffin returns home to his wife, Henrietta. They talk about how they are going to spend the money and become members of society. They want to do something for an orphan or someone less fortunate. They also eventually settle on helping Bella Wilfer, since they believe that she should come live with them so they can somehow ease her loss. First, they make arrangements to adopt a boy, which they plan to name John Harmon. They go to the Wilfer's home to present this plan, and Bella agrees. As they are leaving, Boffin asks after their lodger, John Rokesmith, calling him their mutual friend. Mr. Wilfer is non-committal about his personality.

In Chapter 10, at the Veneering mansion, preparations for a wedding are underway. Mr. Alfred Lamble is going to marry Sophronia. Both believe the other is wealthy, and they will be set for life. After the wedding, they realize the Veneerings have misrepresented them to each other.

In Chapter 11, Mr. John Podsnap is a rich man who is very full of himself. He is married and has a daughter, Georgiana. He and his wife have a birthday party for Georgiana. A foreign man stops into the party, and Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap treat him poorly. Sophronia Lamble talks to Georgiana, who is very shy. When the Lammles leave, Alfred tells his wife to keep an eye on Georgiana because she could be useful.

In Chapter 12, Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn eat dinner together. Eugene says his wife has found a woman for him to marry. Rogue Riderhood comes to see them and says he wants to make a statement. He tells them that he believes Jesse Hexam killed John Harmon, and claims Hexam confessed to him. The men go to the police with this information, as they feel it is their civic duty. However, Riderhood is only hoping to collect a reward for betraying his acquaintance.



## **Chapter 9, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin in Consultation; Chapter 10, A Marriage Contract; Chapter 11, Podsnappery; and Chapter 12, The Sweat of an Honest Man's Brow Analysis**

Noddy and Henrietta Boffin are very pleased with their circumstances, and want to use their money to do good. They decide to adopt a child, to give him a good life he might not otherwise have. They also decide to take in Bella Wilfer, the girl who was to marry John Harmon. This shows that they are both kind, generous people at heart who care about helping others. As a contrast, the Lammles are only concerned with money. When they learn neither of them have any, they resolve to plot and scheme to get what money they can. They begin their plan by trying to entice Georgiana Podsnap to marry an evil man named Fledgeby, so they can get their hands on the fortunes she would inherit. Rogue Riderhood also carries on his scheming. He claims that Jesse Hexam has killed John Harmon, hoping there is a reward for turning the man in. The lawyers, doing their duty, must go to the police with this information.

## **Chapter 13, Tracking the Bird of Prey; Chapter 14, The Bird of Prey Brought Down; Chapter 15, Two New Servants; Chapter 16, Minders and Re-minders; Chapter 17, A Dismal Swamp**

### **Chapter 13, Tracking the Bird of Prey; Chapter 14, The Bird of Prey Brought Down; Chapter 15, Two New Servants; Chapter 16, Minders and Re-minders; Chapter 17, A Dismal Swamp Summary**

At Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, the inspector is investigating a report of missing lime. Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn discuss how the accusation would affect Jesse Hexam's family, and Eugene expresses interest in her daughter. After they leave the tavern, Eugene stops by the Hexam home and sees Lizzie Hexam through the window. They wait outside the Hexam home with the inspector. Eventually, they see the Gaffer's boat empty nearby.

In Chapter 14, the men aren't sure what could have happened to the Gaffer. They go to look for him and find him dead. Eugene disappears, and after the body is taken care of, Mortimer goes to find him. Eugene says he took it in his head to go for a walk.

In Chapter 15, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin sit down to breakfast. John Rokesmith calls on them, and Mr. Boffin agrees to make him his secretary. Boffin confesses at first they thought a secretary was a piece of furniture.

John Rokesmith demonstrates his skills for the Boffins. They show him the house, including the room that was kept for John Harmon, in case he returned to his father. Sila Wegg comes to teach Boffin to read, and Boffin offers him money to give up his stall and look after the house. Mrs. Boffin tells her husband she has seen the faces of the old man Harmon and his two young children who died.

In Chapter 16, Rokesmith immediately gets to work, and soon proves himself. However, he refuses to communicate with Mortimer Lightwood, but asks Boffin not to press for a reason. The Boffins obtain an orphan from Mrs. Betty Higden, a young boy. Bella Wilfer runs into Rokesmith. Bella agrees to live with the Boffins.

In Chapter 17, it is summer and the Boffins are established in the Bower and inundated with visitors. Bella Wilfer also integrates herself into society.



## **Chapter 13, Tracking the Bird of Prey; Chapter 14, The Bird of Prey Brought Down; Chapter 15, Two New Servants; Chapter 16, Minders and Re-minders; Chapter 17, A Dismal Swamp Analysis**

Jesse Hexam has been formally accused of killing John Harmon, although his daughter, Lizzie, knows her father is innocent. Lizzie seems to have caught Eugene Wrayburn's eye, although the man is not upfront about his feelings for the girl. Eugene and Mortimer Lightwood go to find Jesse Hexam, but he has been killed. This indicates that someone wanted to keep him quiet about what really happened the night, when John Harmon's body was found. At the Boffins' home, John Rokesmith proves that he will be a capable secretary for Noddy Boffin. However, it is clear there is something going on. He refuses to see Mortimer Lightwood, perhaps indicating he is afraid the man will recognize him as Julius Handford and implicate him in Harmon's murder. Boffin is still working to improve himself, but it seems that Silas Wegg is somewhat jealous of the man's prosperity. Bella Wilfer also arrives at the Bower, and quickly becomes a society woman. She is happy to finally have the life that she always thought she wanted and the Boffins are very kind to her.



# **Book Two, Birds of a Feather: Chapter 1, Of an Educational Character, Chapter 2, Still Educational; Chapter 3, A Piece of Work; and Chapter 4, Cupid Prompted**

## **Book Two, Birds of a Feather: Chapter 1, Of an Educational Character, Chapter 2, Still Educational; Chapter 3, A Piece of Work; and Chapter 4, Cupid Prompted Summary**

Charley Hexam is away, completing his studies. He has decided to train to be a school master. He invites the headmaster, Bradley Headstone, to come see his sister, Lizzie. She has been supporting herself by sewing since their father's death. Charley is worried about his sister, but she says she is fine.

In Chapter 2, Lizzie returns to her boarding house. She talks with Jenny Wren, a doll's dressmaker who has given Lizzie work. Jenny hopes to be married someday. Eugene Wrayburn comes to visit Lizzie Hexam. He asks if Lizzie has considered his proposal, which is to have teachers come to her at the boarding house and give her lessons. He cautions her against the stubbornness of her father, which kept her from learning in the first place. Lizzie eventually agrees.

In Chapter 3, Mrs. Veneering decides that she would like to see her husband in Parliament. They go to Twemlow to help them drum up support for existing political men. Mr. Podsnap agrees to work on Veneering's behalf as well.

In Chapter 4, Mrs. Lammle has made efforts to become closer to Georgiana Podsnap. Georgiana finds the other woman a welcome respite from her family. Mrs. Lammle tells her of a man named Fledgeby that is infatuated with her. It becomes clear that the Lammles are working some kind of scheme on Georgiana to get her to fall in love with Fledgeby. As they leave, Mr. Lammle congratulates his wife on her good work.



## **Book Two, Birds of a Feather: Chapter 1, Of an Educational Character, Chapter 2, Still Educational; Chapter 3, A Piece of Work; and Chapter 4, Cupid Prompted Analysis**

Lizzie Hexam seems to be doing well after the death of her father, Jesse Hexam. However, her brother, Charley, cannot stop worrying about his sister. Now that she has taken care of him and gotten him started at school, he feels he should do the same for her. However, Lizzie is happy with her life, and does not want his help. Eugene Wrayburn also begins paying more attention to Lizzie, with more success. He manages to convince her to take her education seriously, which indicates that she may have feelings for the man. She is certainly more willing to listen to him than she is her own brother. In the midst of this story, Dickens continues to check in on the members of high society to show the contrast to the other characters, although they are not as wrapped up in the major plotlines. The Lammles continue to work to get Georgiana Podsnap and Fledgeby together and it looks like their plan is working.

## **Chapter 5, Mercury Prompting; Chapter 6, A Riddle without an Answer; Chapter 7, In Which a Friendly Move is Originated; and Chapter 8, In Which an Innocent Elopement Occurs**

### **Chapter 5, Mercury Prompting; Chapter 6, A Riddle without an Answer; Chapter 7, In Which a Friendly Move is Originated; and Chapter 8, In Which an Innocent Elopement Occurs Summary**

Fledgeby is a evil man, who has not done much with his life. Alfred Lammle goes to talk to him about their plan to trick Georgiana out of their money. In Chapter 6, Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn are sitting together in Eugene's office. They laugh and joke about their office space and its amenities. Mortimer says he knows Eugene is withholding something from him. Eugene says he cannot tell him what he has in mind. Bradley Headstone comes with Charley Hexam and speaks with them about Lizzie Hexam. Charley says he and Bradley are wondering why Eugene is paying for Lizzie's education. Charley is upset; because he believes Bradley would be a better teacher. Charley leaves, and Eugene says he hadn't considered Bradley. Eugene realizes Bradley has feelings for Lizzie. Eugene tells Mortimer about this, who asks what Eugene intends to do about it. Eugene says he does not know.

In Chapter 7, Noddy Boffin and Silas Wegg continue their tutoring when Boffin has time. Wegg convinces Boffin to invite him to his home for a drink. He meets with Mr. Venus, and they discuss plans to find out if there's anything valuable in the Bower.

In Chapter 8, Bella Wilfer has settled in with the Boffins. Noddy Boffin tells Bella he is impressed with John Rokesmith's skills, but is not sure why he is so standoffish. Bella is disturbed by Rokesmith's attention toward her. Her sister, Lavinia, is jealous that Bella has obtained such a satisfactory life with the Boffins. Bella takes her father out and tells him she likes being rich, and must marry into money.



## **Chapter 5, Mercury Prompting; Chapter 6, A Riddle without an Answer; Chapter 7, In Which a Friendly Move is Originated; and Chapter 8, In Which an Innocent Elopement Occurs Analysis**

Eugene Wrayburn is clearly infatuated with Lizzie Hexam, although he does not let on about this to his friend, Mortimer Lightwood. He is even paying for Lizzie's education. Charley Hexam, her brother, is bothered by this, partly because he feels Eugene has usurped him in his role as his sister's protector. He also believes that Bradley Headstone, the schoolteacher, would be a much better tutor for Lizzie. It is clear that Bradley Headstone also has feelings for Lizzie Hexam, although this upsets her. She seems to be able to tell there is something sinister about Headstone. At the Boffins, Silas Wegg is continuing to tutor, but he is using the experience for his own gain. He proves that he is a distrustful man, only looking out for himself. However, this fact isn't immediately clear to the Boffins, who are trusting people. He also tries to rope in Mr. Venus, who seems eager for the chance. Bella has confirmed her belief that rich people lead better lives and she tells her father she must marry rich. However, it seems she has some feeling toward John Rokesmith, although he is only a poor secretary.





## **Chapter 9, In Which the Orphan Makes his Will; Chapter 10, A Successor; Chapter 11, Some Affairs of the Heart; and Chapter 12, More Birds of Prey**

### **Chapter 9, In Which the Orphan Makes his Will; Chapter 10, A Successor; Chapter 11, Some Affairs of the Heart; and Chapter 12, More Birds of Prey Summary**

John Rokesmith meets with a man named Mr. Sloppy in regards to little Johnny, the orphan the Boffins are going to adopt. Mr. Sloppy says Johnny does have some health problems. Rokesmith tells Henrietta Boffin, who immediately goes to see the sick boy. They take Johnny to a children's hospital, where Rokesmith is able to make out a will for him before he dies.

In Chapter 10, after Johnny's death, Rokesmith goes to great lengths to comfort Mrs. Boffin, as a son would do for his mother. Mrs. Boffin tells the others she would like to adopt another child, but won't be so concerned about finding a pretty one.

In Chapter 11, Miss Peecher, a teacher in love with Bradley Headstone, asks a student about Lizzie Hexam. She seems to sense Headstone has feelings for the girl. Bradley approaches, saying he just wanted to stop in and make sure all was well. Bradley goes to see Lizzie Hexam to convince her to let him be her teacher. Lizzie says her teacher is adequate. When he leaves, it is obvious that Jenny Wren does not approve of him.

In Chapter 12, Rogue Riderhood lives with his daughter, Pleasant Riderhood. A strange man comes looking for Mr. Riderhood but Pleasant tells him her father is out on her boat. Riderhood comes home, and he doesn't know the man, but recognizes his knife and coat, which once belonged to sailor named George Radfoot. The man says Radfoot is dead; adding he knows Riderhood once got blood-money for betraying Gaffer Hexam and plans to blackmail him.

### **Chapter 9, In Which the Orphan Makes his Will; Chapter 10, A Successor; Chapter 11, Some Affairs of the Heart; and Chapter 12, More Birds of Prey Analysis**

The Boffins have continued with their plans to adopt a child; however, tragedy strikes when the boy passes away. The couple must console themselves that they have given

little Johnny the hope of a better life before he passed away. John Rokesmith has become very close to the Boffins. He is Henrietta's main source of comfort after Johnny dies. Mrs. Boffin seems to have realized that she was placing too much importance on finding a child that appealed to her physically, indicating she can learn from her mistakes. Bradley Headstone is still obsessed with Lizzie, and remains ignorant of Miss Peecher's feelings for him. Jenny Wren, who lets Lizzie live with her, does not like Headstone, another indicator that he is an evil man. Speaking of evil men, Rogue Riderhood gets his own when a man comes who plans to blackmail him. The man knows something fishy has occurred regarding John Hexam's death.



## **Chapter 13, A Solo and a Duett; Chapter 14, Strong of Purpose; and Chapter 15, The Whole Case So Far**

### **Chapter 13, A Solo and a Duett; Chapter 14, Strong of Purpose; and Chapter 15, The Whole Case So Far Summary**

John Harmon, who has been masquerading as John Rokesmith, talks to himself about the events leading up to his supposed death. He has no clue about the exact scene, but is trying to track it. He was afraid of accepting his father's legacy and becoming a greedy and hateful man. While serving on a ship, he worked with George Radfoot, the third mate. They made plans to come to London and see Bella Wilfer, since she was to be Harmon's future wife. They stopped at Rogue Riderhood's, where John Harmon believes Radfoot obtained a drug to knock him out. Harmon is drugged, and sees a figure dressed like him on the bed. Harmon is thrown in the water, but manages to swim to safety. He realizes Radfoot has been killed and was mistaken for him. However, he is happy with his life now, and plans to continue the charade of Rokesmith. He returns home, and speaks with Bella. She expresses her resentment at being treated like property.

In Chapter 14, John Harmon is happy with his decision to live on as John Rokesmith. He speaks with Mr. Wilfer, who is very glad his daughter Bella has found such good patrons. Betty Higden tells the Boffins she has decided to leave, after recovering from young John's death. The Boffins supply her with money, and John Rokesmith tries to arrange schooling for her assistant, Sloopy.

In Chapter 15, Bradley Headstone and Charley Hexam discuss how Headstone can win over Lizzie Hexam. When they meet Lizzie, Charley leaves her alone with Headstone. Headstone tells Lizzie she is the ruin of him. Lizzie tells him he cannot be his wife. He accuses her of accepting favors from Eugene Wrayburn. He leaves when Charley returns, and Lizzie tells her brother what happened. He is disgruntled she threw away such a good opportunity. They meet Wrayburn, and Lizzie warns him to be careful.

### **Chapter 13, A Solo and a Duett; Chapter 14, Strong of Purpose; and Chapter 15, The Whole Case So Far Analysis**

At the end of the second book of the novel, it is revealed that John Rokesmith's secret is that he is, in fact, John Harmon. Through a series of unfortunate circumstances, he was

left for dead but manage to revive himself and swim to shore. Another man, George Radfoot, was mistaken for him because he was wearing Harmon's clothes. Harmon could out himself; however, he enjoys his position working close to Bella Wilfer. He also doesn't want to harm the Boffins, who have done nothing wrong and are enjoying their prosperity. He proves to be a kind, considerate man. Bella also realizes that being a woman of society means being treated like a toy or a beautiful doll and she is not satisfied. Bradley Headstone has now realized that Eugene Wrayburn may have some feelings for Lizzie Hexam. He is overcome with jealousy, and this only serves to push Lizzie Hexam further away. Lizzie warns Wrayburn, fearing that Headstone is capable of harming the man.



## **Chapter 16, An Anniversary Occasion; Book 3, A Long Lane: Chapter 1, Lodgers in Queer Street; Chapter 2, A Respected Friend in a New Aspect; Chapter 3, The Same Respected Friend in More Aspects than One; and Chapter 4, A Happy Return of the Day**

### **Chapter 16, An Anniversary Occasion; Book 3, A Long Lane: Chapter 1, Lodgers in Queer Street; Chapter 2, A Respected Friend in a New Aspect; Chapter 3, The Same Respected Friend in More Aspects than One; and Chapter 4, A Happy Return of the Day Summary**

It is Mr. and Mrs. Lammle's first wedding anniversary, and they host a breakfast in celebration. Mortimer Lightwood says he tried to get in touch with Lizzie Hexam, who has vanished.

In Book 3, A Long Lane: Chapter 1, Riah goes to see Mr. Fledgeby, and makes a payment to him. Alfred Lammle comes to talk to Fledgeby. Podsnap has written a letter to the Lammles, telling them to stay away from Georgiana Podsnap. When Lammle leaves, Fledgeby gets Riah to admit he's the one who has taken away Lizzie Hexam, and knows Eugene Wrayburn has a fondness for the girl. Fledgeby is pleased to hear this.

In Chapter 2, Riah goes to Jenny Wren, and the two walk together. Jenny says she misses Lizzie.

Riah gives Abigail Potterson a letter regarding Lizzie, proving Rogue Riderhood is a villain. However, someone comes and shows them Riderhood's body has been found in the river. He was run into by a steamer.

In Chapter 3, Mrs. Potterson sends for a doctor, who tries to revive Riderhood. He succeeds, and his daughter, Pleasant, is summoned as well.

In Chapter 4, Mr. and Mrs. Wilfer are celebrating their wedding anniversary. Bella comes to help her parents with the festivities. She insists upon cooking for her family. Bella tells

her father that John Rokesmith has asked her to marry him. However, she cannot agree since she wants to marry for money.

## **Chapter 16, An Anniversary Occasion; Book 3, A Long Lane: Chapter 1, Lodgers in Queer Street; Chapter 2, A Respected Friend in a New Aspect; Chapter 3, The Same Respected Friend in More Aspects than One; and Chapter 4, A Happy Return of the Day Analysis**

The Lammle's have continued to try to get Georgiana Podsnap and Fledgeby together; however, it seems Mr. and Mrs. Podsnap have realized the couple has sinister intentions regarding their daughter. It seems that Lizzie Hexam has also fled the area, perhaps afraid of the tensions between her suitors, Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn. She feels that the best way to keep anything from happening is to leave. The other main couple, Bella Wilfer and John Rokesmith, seem to be moving closer to one another, but money is still an obstacle between them. Bella speaks to her favorite confidant, her father, and tells him that she can't accept Rokesmith because he doesn't have much money. She still clings to the belief that money will solve any problem; although it seems she may be swaying from this opinion. She also seems to take pleasure in the simple work of cooking for her family, indicating she is tired of sitting around with no responsibility.



# **Chapter 5, The Golden Dustman Falls into Bad Company; Chapter 6, The Golden Dustman Falls into Worse Company; Chapter 7, The Friendly Move takes up a Strong Position; Chapter 8, The End of a Long Journey; and Chapter 9, Somebody Becomes the Subject of a P**

## **Chapter 5, The Golden Dustman Falls into Bad Company; Chapter 6, The Golden Dustman Falls into Worse Company; Chapter 7, The Friendly Move takes up a Strong Position; Chapter 8, The End of a Long Journey; and Chapter 9, Somebody Becomes the Subject of a Prediction Summary**

Bella Wilfer returns to the Boffins' mansion. Mr. Boffin and John Rokesmith are talking over the secretary's salary. Mrs. Boffin thinks her husband is being harsh on Rokesmith, but Boffin thinks they have to live up to their station in life. Bella finds herself perturbed at his statements, and thinks Mr. Boffin is definitely changing and becoming a miser. She wonders if he's selling himself short for a small price.

In Chapter 6, Mr. Silas Wegg continues to teach Noddy Boffin how to read. Mr. Boffin is proud of his progress.

In Chapter 7, Mr. Wegg and Mr. Venus manage to find a cash box. Wegg stands outside the Boffins' home, bitter at their advantages.

In Chapter 8, Betty Higden is doing well in her travels. She's enjoying traveling through the towns along the Thames river and meeting different people. It is helping her get over Johnny's death. Once, while out in public, Higden doesn't feel well and several people are concerned. She gets better, but she seems to have spells where she goes numb. A woman finds Higden lying on the ground, and nurses her. Higden thinks she is near death. The woman who helps her turns out to be Lizzie Hexam. Higden dies in her arms.



In Chapter 9, Betty Higden's funeral is held. Sloppy is very upset that his mother figure has passed away. John Rokesmith is especially interested to meet Lizzie, the daughter of his supposed murderer. Bella speaks with Rokesmith about Mr. Boffin's worsening treatment of him. Later, Lizzie tells Bella she wishes she could talk to the man who helped clear her father's name. She also says she had to escape from Bradley Headstone's affections, because she was afraid he's violent.

## **Chapter 5, The Golden Dustman Falls into Bad Company; Chapter 6, The Golden Dustman Falls into Worse Company; Chapter 7, The Friendly Move takes up a Strong Position; Chapter 8, The End of a Long Journey; and Chapter 9, Somebody Becomes the Subject of a Prediction Analysis**

Bella Wilfer begins to see the evil that money can bring out in people. She is disturbed that Noddy Boffin has began acting so miserly. He is acting very harshly to John Rokesmith, bickering over his salary. Boffin seems to be letting his fortune go to his head, and Bella finds this distasteful. John and Bella also make the acquaintance of Lizzie Hexam, and she and Bella become friends. Lizzie feels she can confide in Bella, and tells her about Bradley Headstone's unwelcome attentions. Lizzie feels that Bradley is going to get violent if she does not return his love; which seems logical from the way Headstone presents himself as an irrational, obsessed man. Betty Hidgen, the woman who was to help the Boffins find their adoptive son. She is elderly, and soon passes away. This leaves Sloppy very upset, but he will soon find comfort with others.





## **Chapter 10, Scouts Out; Chapter 11, In the Dark; Chapter 12, Meaning Mischief; and Chapter 13, Give a Dog a Bad Name, and Hang Him**

### **Chapter 10, Scouts Out; Chapter 11, In the Dark; Chapter 12, Meaning Mischief; and Chapter 13, Give a Dog a Bad Name, and Hang Him Summary**

Eugene Wrayburn visits Jenny Wren's doll store and tries to buy a doll, but she won't sell one to him. She also implies she won't tell him where Lizzie Hexam is, locks up the shop and leaves. Wrayburn goes to his friend, Mortimer Lightwood. Mortimer says that Riah has come to see him. Wrayburn says that he is still trying to find Lizzie, by any means possible. They walk back home, and they pass a haggard looking man. Mortimer later says the man will haunt him in his dreams.

In Chapter 11, Bradley Headstone cannot sleep that night, as he feels murderous towards Eugene Wrayburn. He goes to check Wrayburn's house, where he runs into Rogue Riderhood at the house, the haggard man Mortimer had seen. Headstone gives him some money, but he isn't sure of the reason yet. Still, he feels making Riderhood's acquaintance might benefit him.

In Chapter 12, Mr. Alfred Lammle sits down to breakfast with his wife. The two are trying to come up with a scheme to get more money. Sophronia Lammle decides to tell Mr. Boffin that Rokesmith has declared his love for Bella Wilfer. They think they can benefit from this in some way, and solve their money troubles.

In Chapter 13, Jenny Wren comes to see Riah, but Fledgeby said he's not in. Mr. Twemlow also comes to wait for Riah, who has lent him money. Riah arrives, and says he will hold Twemlow to his debt. Fledgeby tries to get Riah to give Twemlow a break but it is to no avail. Jenny buys some goods from Riah. She warns him that he shall not harm Lizzie in any way.

### **Chapter 10, Scouts Out; Chapter 11, In the Dark; Chapter 12, Meaning Mischief; and Chapter 13, Give a Dog a Bad Name, and Hang Him Analysis**

Eugene Wrayburn also has his own obsession with Lizzie Hexam, although he seems to be much less harmful than Bradley Headstone. Wrayburn seems to want to genuinely

help the girl; however, Lizzie's friends feel that she is better off left alone by both men. Bradley Headstone shows that his reaction to the loss of Lizzie is indeed violent. He acts like he wants to assault Wrayburn, very jealous that she might be with his rival. Headstone is not logical enough to see that Lizzie might want to get away from both men. Headstone also meets with Rogue Riderhood, and the joining of two despicable men cannot be a sign of good things to come for either of them. The Lammles, as well, have proven themselves to be dishonorable. They decide to tell Boffin about John Rokesmith's feelings for Bella Wilfer, hoping this will bring them some monetary gain.

## **Chapter 14, Mr. Wegg Prepares a Grindstone for Mr. Boffin's Nose; Chapter 15, The Golden Dustman at his Worst; Chapter 16, The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins; and Chapter 17, A Social Chorus**

### **Chapter 14, Mr. Wegg Prepares a Grindstone for Mr. Boffin's Nose; Chapter 15, The Golden Dustman at his Worst; Chapter 16, The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins; and Chapter 17, A Social Chorus Summary**

Mr. Venus has begun helping at the Bower even more, since he and Silas Wegg prove good listeners when Noddy Boffin wants to talk about his wealth. Mr. Venus eventually becomes close to Mr. Boffin, and confesses he had a role in a plot against the man. He tells him he and Wegg both saw him dig up a bottle one night, that they believe contained a will, and they were going to blackmail him. They know that a later will leaves the Bower to the government, not to the Boffins. Wegg returns, and Boffin hides so he can hear what happens. Wegg and Venus discuss how Boffin doesn't know they have a claim to his property. Wegg says he means to make Boffin pay plenty of money. Boffin asks Venus to stay in on the plot, so they can find out more are needed. After Venus leaves, Mrs. Lammle comes to see Boffin.

In Chapter 15, the Boffins and Bella Wilfer usually have a pleasant breakfast together. However, one morning, after talking to Mrs. Lammle, Noddy Boffin glares at John Rokesmith.

Mr. Boffin tells John Rokesmith that he has stepped beyond his bounds in trying to pursue Bella Wilfer. He thinks Rokesmith just wants Bella's inheritance. Rokesmith says he will leave, but he wants Bella to know he will always be devoted to her. After he goes, Bella yells at Mr. Boffin, telling him his money has ruined him. She leaves to go back to her family.

In Chapter 16, Bella visits her father at his office. Mr. Wilfer is surprised to see her. Rokesmith follows her there, and he and Bella profess their love for one another. Mr. Wilfer is proud of his daughter, and they go home to tell Mrs. Wilfer.

In Chapter 17, Mr. and Mrs. Lammle's possessions are about to be auctioned off. Mrs. Lammle goes to see Mr. Twemlow, who promises not to use any information he has



learned against them. He also tells her he is in debt to Mr. Riah, but Mrs. Lammle says that is only a screen for Mr. Fledgeby.

## **Chapter 14, Mr. Wegg Prepares a Grindstone for Mr. Boffin's Nose; Chapter 15, The Golden Dustman at his Worst; Chapter 16, The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins; and Chapter 17, A Social Chorus Analysis**

Mr. Venus shows that he is not quite the despicable man that Silas Wegg believes him to be. He shows he is an honorable person by confessing to Noddy Boffin that Silas Wegg is plotting against him. John Harmon Sr. was a fickle man, who changed his will before his death to leave his estate to the crown. Wegg believes Boffin knows about this but has tried to hide it, therefore committing a crime. Boffin thinks they should let Wegg keep going with his plotting, therefore to catch him out when he least expects it. Noddy Boffin also becomes a catalyst for Bella Wilfer and John Rokesmith's relationship. When he finds out that John has feelings for Bella, he fires him, causing Bella to make a decision and realize she loves John, whether he is poor or he is rich. Bella leaves the Boffins and goes with her love. She tells her father about her decision, and he is very proud that she has finally come to her senses. The Lammle's planning has failed them, and they are now penniless. If instead of scheming, they had chosen to get jobs, they would have been better off and may have saved their possessions.

# **Book Four, A Turning: Chapter 1, Setting Traps; Chapter 2, The Golden Dustman Rises a Little; Chapter 3, The Golden Dustman Sinks Again; and Chapter 4, A Runaway Match**

## **Book Four, A Turning: Chapter 1, Setting Traps; Chapter 2, The Golden Dustman Rises a Little; Chapter 3, The Golden Dustman Sinks Again; and Chapter 4, A Runaway Match Summary**

Bradley Headstone runs into Rogue Riderhood, who realizes the man is looking for Eugene Wrayburn. Riderhood says he spoke to Wrayburn, who made jokes at his expense. Headstone, disguised as a bargeman, continues to follow Wrayburn. He later returns after discovering Wrayburn is staying the night at the Angler's Inn. When Bradley goes out again, he discovers Wrayburn has met with Lizzie Hexam. Headstone is so enraged, his nose begins to bleed.

In Chapter 2, the Lammles have breakfast with the Boffins. The Boffins appear to be in an foul mood. Mrs. Boffin thanks Mrs. Lammler for doing them a kindness, and offers to give them money. Georgiana Podsnap arrives, and is devastated to learn of the Lammler's misfortunes. She gives them some money as well.

In Chapter 3, Mr. Boffin goes to his reading lesson. He meets Mr. Venus on the way, who says he believes Silas Wegg is going to tell him he knows about the will tonight. When he arrives, Wegg tells Boffin he's been his slave for long enough. Wegg says he knows about the will, and wants Boffin to give him some of his property in exchange for remaining quiet about it. Wegg enjoys tormenting Boffin about his hold over him.

In Chapter 4, Bella Wilfer and her father sneak out of the house early one morning to meet John Rokesmith. Bella and John are married in a secret ceremony, and Bella writes a letter to her mother asking her not to be angry with her. She also pretends that her father was not present at the ceremony, asking Mrs. Wilfer to tell her father about the marriage. They attend a vast wedding feast in their honor.



## **Book Four, A Turning: Chapter 1, Setting Traps; Chapter 2, The Golden Dustman Rises a Little; Chapter 3, The Golden Dustman Sinks Again; and Chapter 4, A Runaway Match Analysis**

Bradley Headstone continues to let his obsession get the better of him. He is now following Eugene Wrayburn, sure that the man was going to lead him to Lizzie Hexam. Headstone sees that his suspicions were true, and it infuriates him so much it seems obvious he is going to do something to harm either Eugene or Lizzie, or possibly both of them. Silas Wegg finally reveals his hand to Noddy Boffin, telling him he knows about the will. Boffin does not tell the man that Mr. Venus has already confessed this to him. He lets Wegg think that he has a leg up, but doesn't commit to giving the man any money. Bella Wilfer manages to arrange her marriage to John Rokesmith. They only invite her father, because her mother and sister would not approve of her marrying such a poor man who just lost his job. Her father would also face her mother's wrath, so they keep his presence a secret from her as well. This shows that Bella has finally turned the corner, and truly understands that one can be both poor and happy.



## **Chapter 5, Concerning the Mendicant's Bride; Chapter 6, A Cry for Help; Chapter 7, Better to be Abel than Cain; and Chapter 8, A Few Grains of Pepper**

### **Chapter 5, Concerning the Mendicant's Bride; Chapter 6, A Cry for Help; Chapter 7, Better to be Abel than Cain; and Chapter 8, A Few Grains of Pepper Summary**

Mrs. Wilfer is upset to learn that Bella Wilfer has married John Rokesmith behind her back. However, she tells her husband that Bella is welcome to come to her. Bella does, and embraces her mother joyously. She apologizes for having run away and getting married without telling them. On their walk home, John asks if she minds being poor, but she says it doesn't matter as long as he has her. Bella tells him later that she thinks she may be pregnant.

In Chapter 6, Eugene Wrayburn is walking by the river when he meets Lizzie Hexam. She tells Wrayburn she cannot marry him because she is of a lower class. They part, but Lizzie hears Wrayburn being attacked by someone. She pulls him from the river and gets him to a doctor.

In Chapter 7, Rogue Riderhood is working at the Plashwater Weir Mill Lock. Bradley Headstone comes to the lock, and Riderhood realizes the man has been in a struggle. Headstone goes to sleep. When he awakens, Riderhood tells him Lizzie found the body of Eugene Wrayburn. Headstone leaves, but Riderhood follows him. Headstone returns to school, where Charley Hexam tells him Eugene Wrayburn is believed to be dead. Charley says if Headstone did something to Wrayburn, it is unforgivable.

In Chapter 8, Mr. Fledgeby goes to see Jenny Wren at her store. He has come on behalf of Riah, and asks her how she would like to get materials at a discount. When he prepares to leave, someone rubs a mixture on Fledgeby's face, making him choke. Jenny Wren helps him, and he tells her Alfred Lammle has assaulted him.



## **Chapter 5, Concerning the Mendicant's Bride; Chapter 6, A Cry for Help; Chapter 7, Better to be Abel than Cain; and Chapter 8, A Few Grains of Pepper Analysis**

Bella Wilfer is able to convince her mother that she is truly happy. She and John set up their own little life together, and Bella soon becomes pregnant. The couple shows that happiness can be found anywhere. However, it appears Bella will be in for a surprise if her husband is revealed to be John Harmon, the heir of the Bower. The other couple, Eugene Wrayburn and Lizzie Hexam, don't appear to have a happy ending coming for them at this time. Lizzie is worried that her low station in life would reflect badly on Eugene, so tries to send him away. However, he is attacked by someone, most likely Bradley Headstone, and Lizzie cannot turn her back on him. Bradley stays with Rogue Riderhood after attacking Eugene. Although he does not come out and tell him what he has done, Riderhood is able to put the pieces together and plans to blackmail him at a future time. Alfred Lammle also seems to get revenge on Fledgeby for not following through on the plan to get Georgiana Podsnap to love him.



## **Chapter 9, Two Places Vacated; Chapter 10, The Dolls' Dressmaker Discovers A Word; Chapter 11, Effect is Given to the Dolls' Dressmaker's Discovery; Chapter 12, The Passing Shadow; and Chapter 13, Showing how the Golden Dustman Helped to Scatter Dust**

### **Chapter 9, Two Places Vacated; Chapter 10, The Dolls' Dressmaker Discovers A Word; Chapter 11, Effect is Given to the Dolls' Dressmaker's Discovery; Chapter 12, The Passing Shadow; and Chapter 13, Showing how the Golden Dustman Helped to Scatter Dust Summary**

Jenny Wren sees Mr. Riah, who informs her he is free of the servitude he was required to pay Mr. Fledgeby. Mortimer Lightwood comes with a message from Lizzie Hexam. She wants Jenny to come to see her, since Eugene Wrayburn is dying.

In Chapter 10, Eugene Wrayburn is not doing well after the attack. Jenny Wren tries to comfort Wrayburn as best she can. Eugene tells Mortimer that his attacker can't be brought to justice, because Lizzie's reputation would be ruined. He tells him it was not Bradley Headstone. Eugene tells Mortimer he wishes to be married to Lizzie. (Chapter 11, Effect is Given to the Dolls' Dressmaker's Discovery) Mortimer brings Bella Lightwood to see the wedding, but John Rokesmith won't see Mortimer, although he won't tell Bella why.

Bradley Headstone meets the priest going to Lizzie Hexam's; he thinks he is going to perform a funeral, but the priest says it is to be a wedding. Eugene Wrayburn and Lizzie are married.

In Chapter 12, John and Bella Rokesmith have a baby named Bella. John is still unsettled about something. One day, they run into Mortimer Lightwood, who recognizes John as Julius Handford, a man wanted for questioning in the murder of John Harmon. The inspector comes and John goes to the police station, where two men view him for identification. He then takes Bella to what he calls their new home, and goes to the Boffins. The Boffins are thrilled the two are married.



In Chapter 13, Bella is bewildered but learns Boffin only acted miserly to show her money was not important and hasten her marriage to John. They knew John was really John Harmon.

## **Chapter 9, Two Places Vacated; Chapter 10, The Dolls' Dressmaker Discovers A Word; Chapter 11, Effect is Given to the Dolls' Dressmaker's Discovery; Chapter 12, The Passing Shadow; and Chapter 13, Showing how the Golden Dustman Helped to Scatter Dust Analysis**

Lizzie Hexam cannot deny her feelings for Eugene Wrayburn when the man is near dying. She still has some reservations about their difference in social statuses, but she knows it means the world to him. She allows herself to be loved by him, despite the consequences. Bella and John Rokesmith are invited to the wedding, but John won't let Mortimer see him. This is a reference to the early events of the novel, as Rokesmith is afraid Mortimer Lightwood will recognize him as Julius Handford and connect him to the murder of John Harmon. Although they make it to the wedding, Rokesmith cannot avoid Mortimer completely and the truth comes out. John Rokesmith finally reveals that the Boffins have knows who he is for some time and willingly went along with a plan to make Bella realize she loved John Harmon for who he was and not for the money he supposedly had. Noddy Boffin had been putting on an act the entire time, pretending to be miserly so Bella could see how money can ruin people.



## **Chapter 14, Checkmate to the Friendly Move; Chapter 15, What was Caught in the Traps that were Set; Chapter 16, Persons and Things in General; Chapter 17, The Voice of Society; and Postscript, In Lieu of Preface**

### **Chapter 14, Checkmate to the Friendly Move; Chapter 15, What was Caught in the Traps that were Set; Chapter 16, Persons and Things in General; Chapter 17, The Voice of Society; and Postscript, In Lieu of Preface Summary**

Silas Wegg plans to bring Noddy Boffin down. He goes to see Mr. Venus, who is in a good mood. Wegg wants to get his artificial limb back from Venus. Venus says he is going to get married to Pleasant Riderhood. Wegg goes to see Boffin, and tries ordering him around. Boffin refuses to listen to him, and says they will not be making a deal. John Harmon tells him that his father made a later will, giving everything to the Boffins, and Noddy Boffin hid it because he thought it disparaged John Harmon's good name. They throw Wegg out of the house.

In Chapter 15, Bradley Headstone is distraught that he has lost Lizzie for good. Riderhood goes to see Bradley, planning to blackmail him with the clothes he wore the night he attacked Eugene Wrayburn. They meet later, alone, and Headstone says he doesn't have any money. They struggle and fall into the river by the lock house, both drowning.

In Chapter 16, John and Bella Harmon have set to straightening up their affairs and clearing his name. Bella now knows how to cope with being rich, since she realizes money doesn't bring true happiness. Eugene Wrayburn has begun to recover, and he and Lizzie have become friends with the Harmons.

In Chapter 17, Mortimer Lightwood goes to visit the Veneerings. He defends Lizzie Hexam to the present company, who view her as beneath them.

In the Postscript, Charles Dickens says he was not concerned most readers would realize that John Harmon was masquerading as John Rokesmith. He discusses the writing of the book.



## **Chapter 14, Checkmate to the Friendly Move; Chapter 15, What was Caught in the Traps that were Set; Chapter 16, Persons and Things in General; Chapter 17, The Voice of Society; and Postscript, In Lieu of Preface Analysis**

Silas Wegg tries to bring his plan to completion. He comes to Noddy Boffin intending to blackmail the man and bring him low. However, Boffin reveals that Venus had told him about the plot, which wouldn't have worked anyway. The will that Silas had was not the latest will, because John Harmon Sr. changed his estate several times. He eventually decided to leave it to the Boffins; however, Noddy Boffin hid this copy, as it might make the relationship between the old man and his son look strained. Therefore, the estate does belong to the Boffins. Wegg is humiliated and thrown out. Bradley Headstone and Rogue Riderhood finally get what they deserve. Both men get in a fight as a result of their treachery and end up drowning. This is a fit punishment for what they have done to others. John and Bella Harmon are able to straighten their affairs, and will live in the Bowers with the Boffins. When the Boffins die, the couple will inherit the estate. Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn will also live happily, although they will have to overcome some snide remarks about their 'mixed marriage.'

# Characters

## John Harmon

John Harmon is the heir of the Harmon estate, as long as he marries a girl named Bella Wilfer. However, he is presumed to be dead when a man wearing his clothes and with his possessions is found in the River Thames. Harmon, however, actually assumes the identity of John Rokesmith and initially obtains a room at the Wilfer household. He later attains a position as Noddy Boffin's secretary, allowing him to get to know Bella Wilfer, who has become the ward of the Boffins. Rokesmith is an upright man, who does his job well. He eventually falls in love with Bella, and with Mr. Boffin's assistance, assures himself of the girl's love for him. When Boffin dismisses Rokesmith for making advances towards Bella, she decides to move out and proclaim her love for him. Bella later learns that Boffin only fired Rokesmith to make Bella realize that she was willing to leave money behind to marry him. The two are married in a secret ceremony, with only Bella's father present. Eventually, Rokesmith is revealed to be John Harmon, and again becomes the heir of the same estate, this time from the Boffins. Harmon helps Boffin rebuff Silas Wegg, who is trying to blackmail Boffin. He and Bella have a daughter, which they also name Bella.

## Bella Wilfer

Bella Wilfer is a young woman from a poor family who dreams of being rich. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wilfer and the sister of Lavinia Wilfer. She is promised as a bride to John Harmon, but loses her chance to marry rich when he is reportedly found dead. Bella was not looking forward to marry him but was looking forward to being a rich man's wife. She moves in with the Boffins, and continues to hope for a rich husband until she realizes she has fallen in love with John Rokesmith, really John Harmon in disguise. She does not admit her love, still believing she needs to marry rich. However, when Mr. Boffin dismisses Harmon, Bella Wilfer leaves their home and confesses her love for Rokesmith. She now knows that money isn't important as being married to someone who loves her. The two are later married, and she is no longer concerned only with money. Bella lives a happy, full life, taking an active part in her relationship with John. She is no longer content to be someone's property. She also has a very close relationship with her father, Mr. Wilfer. He is the only family member who attends her wedding to Rokesmith. Her father is pleased to see his daughter has realized that money can't buy her happiness. Bella and John Harmon eventually have a daughter, Bella. He reveals to her that he is not Rokesmith, but Harmon, and they move into the Bower with the Boffins.

## **Noddy Boffin**

Noddy Boffin, also known as the Golden Dustman, becomes rich when he is left the Bowers estate, along with his life. He hires Silas Wegg to read to him in an effort to become more educated. He pretends to become more of a miser as the novel progresses; however this is only a ploy to show Bella that money isn't the answer to all problems. Silas Wegg tries to blackmail him with a will showing the Bowers estate should have gone to the government; however, Boffin is able to thwart him.

## **Lizzie Hexam**

Lizzie Hexam is the daughter of Jesse Hexam and the sister of Charley Hexam. Along with her father, she discovers the body of the man believed to be John Harmon. Both Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn fall in love with her. After Headstone attacks Wrayburn, Lizzie saves him and marries him.

## **Eugene Wrayburn**

Eugene Wrayburn is a lawyer who falls in love with Lizzie Hexam. He is attacked by Bradley Headstone, who also loves Lizzie. However, Lizzie saves him and marries him.

## **Rogue Riderhood**

Rogue Riderhood is a evil man who turns Jesse Hexam in as the murderer of John Harmon. He later tries to blackmail Headstone for trying to kill Eugene Wrayburn. He and Headstone drown after a fight.

## **Bradley Headstone**

Bradley Headstone is a schoolteacher who falls in love with Lizzie Hexam. Lizzie is scared by his advances. Headstone is threatened by Eugene Wrayburn, who also loves Lizzie, and ends up attacking him. He later drowns after a fight with Rogue Riderhood.

## **Silas Wegg**

Silas Wegg is a man with one leg who teaches Noddy Boffin how to read. He later tries to blackmail Mr. Boffin but fails.

## **Henrietta Boffin**

Henrietta Boffin is the wife of Noddy Boffin. She is a very motherly woman. She wants to adopt a boy named Johnny but the boy dies.



## **Charley Hexam**

Charley Hexam is the brother of Lizzie Hexam and the son of Jesse Hexam. He pushes his sister to marry Bradley Headstone.

## **Mortimer Lightwood**

Mortimer Lightwood is a lawyer and a friend of Eugene Wrayburn.

## **Jenny Wren**

Jenny Wren is a dollmaker who lets Lizzie Hexam live with her after the death of her father, Jesse Hexam.

## **Mr. Venus**

Mr. Venus is a taxidermist who pretends to be friends with Silas Wegg. However, he alerts Noddy Boffin to Wegg's blackmail scheme.

## **Mr. Riah**

Mr. Riah is a money-lender who is very kind to Jenny Wren and Lizzie Hexam.

## **John Podsnap**

John Podsnap is an upper-class man and father of Georgiana Podsnap.

## **Georgiana Podsnap**

Georgiana Podsnap is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Podsnap. She is a very sheltered young woman.

## **Mr. Fledgeby**

Mr. Fledgeby is a corrupt, greedy man who schemes to marry Georgiana Podsnap.

## **Alfred Lammle**

Mr. Alfred Lammle is a scheming man who is always trying to gain money.



## **Sophronia Lammle**

Mrs. Sophronia Lammle is a scheming woman who is always looking for ways to get more money.

## **Mr. Wilfer**

Mr. Wilfer is Bella Wilfer's father, and is very fond of his daughter.

## **Mrs. Wilfer**

Mrs. Wilfer is Bella's mother. Bella keeps the knowledge of her wedding to John Rokesmith from her mother until after the ceremony.

## **Jesse Hexam**

Jesse Hexam is the father of Lizzie and Charley Hexam. He finds the body that is believed to be John Harmon in the river. Rogue Riderhood tries to pin Harmon's murder on Hexam, but Hexam is then found dead.

## **Lavinia Wilfer**

Lavinia Wilfer is the sister of Bella Wilfer.

## **Melvin Twemlow**

Melvin Twemlow is a member of the upper-class in London.

## **Betty Higden**

Betty Higden is an elderly woman who cares for poor children.

## **Johnny**

Johnny is a child that Betty Higden takes care of, but he dies before the Boffins can adopt him.

## **Sloppy**

Sloppy is a orphan who assists Betty Higden.





## **Pleasant Riderhood**

Pleasant Riderhood is the daughter of Rogue Riderhood.

## **Mr. and Mrs. Veneering**

Mr. and Mrs. Veneering are members of the upper-class.

## **Abbey Potterson**

Abbey Potterson is the mistress of the Six Jolly Fellowship Porters, an inn in London.

## **Miss Peecher**

Miss Peecher is a schoolteacher in love with Bradley Headstone.

# **Objects/Places**

## **Thames**

Thames is a river that runs through the city of London, England. The river figures in many of the plot lines in the novel.

## **London**

London is the capital city of England. It is where most of the action in the novel takes place.

## **London Bridge**

London Bridge is a famous bridge in the capital city of London, England. It goes over the Thames River.

## **The school**

The school is where Bradley Headstone is a teacher and Charley Hexam attends classes.

## **Chicksey, Veneering and Stobbles**

Chicksey, Veneering and Stobbles is a shipping firm in London, England.

## **Six Jolly Fellowship Porters**

Six Jolly Fellowship Porters is a tavern in London.

## **Plashwater Weir Mill Lock-house**

Plashwater Weir Mill Lock-house is a lock house on the river Thames. Rogue Riderhood works there for some time.

## **Angler's Inn**

Angler's Inn is a inn where Eugene Wrayburn stays while Bradley Headstone is following him.

## **Parliament**

Parliament is a governing body in England.

## **Pubsey and Co.**

Pubsey and Co. is a business in London, England.

## **The Golden Dustman**

The Golden Dustman is a nickname used by Noddy Boffin throughout the novel.

# Themes

## Money

Many of the plot points in the novel, *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, revolve around money. Many of the characters are overly concerned with getting money, whether by honest or dishonest means. The novel begins with the Boffins, former servants who have inherited an estate from their former master. The problems they have once receiving the money, such as Noddy Boffin's supposedly miserly ways and Silas Wegg's blackmail attempt, are highlighted through the novel. Bella Wilfer, a young girl from a poor family, is supposed to marry John Harmon for money and even when that falls through, she seems to believe she needs to marry a rich man to be happy. It is only through the combined efforts of John Rokesmith and the Boffins that she sees the error of her ways and realizes love is what is truly important. Many of the characters in the novel try to get their hands on money through nefarious means. Rogue Riderhood falsely fingers Jesse Hexam as John Harmon's killer in order to collect a reward, and later tries to blackmail Bradley Headstone. The Lammles try to arrange a marriage so they can get their hands on the young girl's family money. Money is a prime motivator for many of the events that take place in the novel.

## Social Status

In the novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, the author Charles Dickens frequently explores the social structure of London in the 1860s. One of his primary focus is the conflict between an individual doing what they wish to do, and doing what is expected of them by society. One example of this is the relationship between Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn. Lizzie refuses to marry Wrayburn at first because she is of a much lower social class, and knows that Eugene's standing in society will drop because of their marriage. However, Eugene does not care what society thinks of him, feeling his love for Lizzie is more important. Another example is John Harmon, who went along with his supposed death to avoid marrying Bella Wilfer purely to get his inheritance. Bella herself is more concerned with marrying a rich man at first; but soon realizes money can't make everything go smoothly. However, it works out in the end as the two end up getting married for love. Noddy Boffins, formerly a servant at the Bower, feels the need to improve himself by learning how to read after he inherits the estate and becomes a member of the upper class. Dickens also gives some insight to members of high society like the Veneerings and their friend Twemlow, as a contrast to the interactions of the poor. It is clear there is a social structure in England that colors the actions of almost all characters in the novel.

## Rebirth

The novel, *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, contains heavy symbolism pointing toward rebirth. Many descriptions in the novel relate to water, a sign of rebirth, much like a baptism. The Thames River is featured quite prominently in several scenes, beginning with the finding of a body. John Harmon, who was thought to have drowned, is able to emerge from the river and begin a new life as John Rokesmith. He wants this new life to prove he can make it in the world without his father's money or influence. He eventually reveals his true identity; but his time as Rokesmith allowed him to secure the love of Bella Wilfer. Eugene Wrayburn ends up in the water after Bradley Headstone attacks him; however Lizzie Hexam finds him and rescues him. This event gives the two new life together as a couple, as Lizzie cannot deny Eugene in his time of need. Rogue Riderhood also almost drowns, but survives the first time. However, he does not change his ways or become a new man; he later drowns in the river again after attempting to blackmail Bradley Headstone. While the water may give new life to a person, it is up to them to improve upon their situation with the gift.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel, *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, uses a third-person omniscient point of view. This is a method of storytelling where the reader is privy to all of the thoughts and feelings of all of the characters, as the narrator chooses to present them. This technique allows authors like Dickens to create a rich and varied world, allowing the reader to experience the story through the eyes of several different characters. It also allows Dickens to show the same events through the eyes of different characters. For example, although the reader knows about halfway through the novel that John Rokesmith is actually John Harmon, Bella is not privy to this information. Through the use of omniscient narration, we can see how her thought processes and feelings develop as she suspects something is awry with her husband and he is not who he seems. We also see both sides when Silas Wegg tries to blackmail Noddy Boffin. Although the reader and Boffin are both aware of Silas' plan, Silas himself is not aware Boffin knows until he tells him. This style of narration gives the reader a fuller comprehension of what is going through each of the character's minds and an understanding of their motivations and goals.

## Setting

The novel, *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, is set in London, England beginning in the year 1864. It was Dickens' last completed novel, and the first he wrote in "contemporary" time, meaning it was written about the time he was living in. This was a departure from many of his other novels, which were written in the past. Through this technique, Dickens was able to examine the society he was currently living in and offer his viewpoint on social interactions at the time. The novel is primarily set in London, which is the biggest and capital city of England. Dickens was very familiar with life in the city and used that to give his novels an authentic feel. He describes the settings in both the poor areas of the city and the rich in great detail, focusing on the elements that bring the settings to life, such as the garbage, ashes, and rubbish in the poor parts of the city. He also describes the more opulent homes of the rich, to show the contrast between them and the poor of the city. Dickens uses this to show his viewpoints on the evils of such a social structure.

## Language and Meaning

The novel, *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, is set in 1864 London, England, and therefore the language used is indicative of that time period. At that time, novels were a primary form of entertainment, so writers tended to enrich their stories with long descriptions and flowery language. Many of the words chosen are more proper and varied than the type found in more contemporary novels. Dickens also uses differences

in dialogue to show the chasm between the rich and the poor among London's social classes. The rich tend to be more proper in their manner of speaking, using correct words and spellings. They are not as direct with each other; frequently talking around subjects without giving their true feelings or using euphemisms. On the other hand, the poor tend to talk in a much more coarse manner, shortening words quite frequently. They are also quicker to be direct and say what they mean to one another. The use of language and meaning is another avenue for Dickens to provide his view on the social structure of London in the 1800s.

## Structure

The novel, *Our Mutual Friend* by Charles Dickens, is primarily structured into four separate books, with each book containing about 17 chapters, followed by a brief postscript. The action throughout the novel jumps from several different plot threads. The primary thread concerns John Harmon's mysterious death, his connection to John Rokesmith, and his relationship with Bella Wilfer. A secondary and prominent plot line includes the love triangle between Lizzie Hexam, Eugene Wrayburn, and Bradley Headstone and the consequences of Headstone's obsessions. A third significant plot concerns Noddy Boffin and Silas Wegg's attempt to blackmail him. Finally, a final plot thread concerns the more prominent members of society such as the Lammles as well as their interactions with the main characters of the novel as well as their schemes. Dickens primarily devotes each chapter to advance one of the plot lines, but on occasion more than one story will converge in the same chapter. This allows Dickens to keep the reader interested in several stories at once.

## Quotes

"No. Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to? 'Tother world. What world does money belong to? This world. How can money be a corpse's? Can a corpse own it, want it, spend it, claim it, miss it? Don't try to go confounding the rights and wrongs of things in that way. But it's worthy of the sneaking spirit that robs a live man (Book 1: Ch. 1, On the Look Out, pg. 16.)

"Why, no," says Mortimer; "remarkable thing, you are all wrong. The story is completer and rather more exciting than I supposed. Man's drowned!" (Book 1: Ch. 2, The Man From Somewhere, pg. 27.)

"If there is a word in the dictionary under any letter from A to Z that I abominate, it is energy. It is such a conventional superstition, such parrot gabble! What the deuce! Am I to rush out into the street, collar the first man of a wealthy appearance that I meet, shake him, and say, 'Go to law upon the spot, you dog, and retain me, or I'll be the death of you'? Yet that would be energy" (Book 1: Ch. 3, Another Man, pg. 29.)

"The idea of being a kind of a widow, and never having been married! And the idea of being as poor as ever after all, and going into black, besides, for a man I never saw, and should have hated—as far as HE was concerned—if I had seen!" (Book 1: Ch. 4, The R. Wilfer Family, pg. 45-46.)

"The relief of hearing what she felt sure was a false suspicion, in place of the expected real and true one, so lightened Lizzie's breast for the moment, that Miss Abbey was amazed at her demeanour" (Book 1: Ch. 6, Cut Adrift, pg. 74.)

"'I may call him Our Mutual Friend,' said Mr Boffin. 'What sort of a fellow IS Our Mutual Friend, now? Do you like him?'" (Book 1: Ch. 9, Mr. and Mrs. Boffin in Consultation, pg. 115.)

"You have called me an adventurer, Sophronia. So I am. In plain uncomplimentary English, so I am. So are you, my dear. So are many people. We agree to keep our own secret, and to work together in furtherance of our own schemes." (Book 1: Ch. 10, A Marriage Contract, pg. 130.)

"That mysterious paper currency which circulates in London when the wind blows, gyrated here and there and everywhere. Whence can it come, whither can it go? It hangs on every bush, flutters in every tree, is caught flying by the electric wires, haunts



every enclosure, drinks at every pump, cowers at every grating, shudders upon every plot of grass, seeks rest in vain behind the legions of iron rails." (Book 1: Ch. 12, The Sweat of an Honest Man's Brow, pg. 147.)

"There you're a little bit fast. I'm going to earn from five to ten thousand pound by the sweat of my brow; and as a poor man doing justice to the sweat of my brow, is it likely I can afford to part with so much as my name without its being took down?" (Book 1: Ch. 12, The Sweat of an Honest Man's Brow, pg. 152.)

"'It rather puzzled me at the time,' said Mr. Boffin, 'and it rather puzzled me and Mrs Boffin when we spoke of it afterwards, because (not to make a mystery of our belief) we have always believed a Secretary to be a piece of furniture, mostly of mahogany, lined with green baize or leather, with a lot of little drawers in it. Now, you won't think I take a liberty when I mention that you certainly ain't THAT'" (Book 1: Ch. 15, Two New Servants, pg. 180.)

'The room was kept like this, Rokesmith,' said Mr Boffin, 'against the son's return. In short, everything in the house was kept exactly as it came to us, for him to see and approve. Even now, nothing is changed but our own room below-stairs that you have just left. When the son came home for the last time in his life, and for the last time in his life saw his father, it was most likely in this room that they met.' (Book 1: Ch. 15, Two New Servants, pg. 185.)

"'Oh little Georgiana, little Georgiana!' Which was not much; but the tone added, 'You have enslaved your Fledgeby.'" (Book 2: Ch. 4, Cupid Prompted, pg. 265.)

"You know that when I became enough of a man to find myself an embodied conundrum, I bored myself to the last degree by trying to find out what I meant. You know that at length I gave it up, and declined to guess any more. Then how can I possibly give you the answer that I have not discovered?" (Book 2: Ch. 6, A Riddle without an Answer, pg. 283.)

"The minion of fortune and the worm of the hour, or in less cutting language, Nicodemus Boffin, Esquire, the Golden Dustman, had become as much at home in his eminently aristocratic family mansion as he was likely ever to be. He could not but feel that, like an eminently aristocratic family cheese, it was much too large for his wants, and bred an infinite amount of parasites; but he was content to regard this drawback on his property as a sort of perpetual Legacy Duty" (Book 2: Ch. 8, In Which an Innocent Elopement Occurs, pg. 303-304.)

"I am a man of strong feelings, and I have strongly felt this disappointment. I do strongly feel it. I don't show what I feel; some of us are obliged habitually to keep it down. To keep it down" (Book 2: Ch. 11, Some Affairs of the Heart, pg. 339.)



" 'I have no clue to the scene of my death,' said he. 'Not that it matters now. But having risked discovery by venturing here at all, I should have been glad to track some part of the way'" (Book 2: Ch. 13, A Solo and a Duett, pg. 360.)

"No ghost should trouble Mr and Mrs Boffin's peace; invisible and voiceless, the ghost should look on for a little while longer at the state of existence out of which it had departed, and then should for ever cease to haunt the scenes in which it had no place" (Book 2: Ch. 14, Strong of Purpose, pg. 382.)

"See! A token of life! An indubitable token of life! The spark may smoulder and go out, or it may glow and expand, but see! The four rough fellows, seeing, shed tears. Neither Riderhood in this world, nor Riderhood in the other, could draw tears from them; but a striving human soul between the two can do it easily" (Book 3: Ch. 3, The Same Respected Friend in More Aspects than One, pg. 440.)

"The state of the man was murderous, and he knew it. More; he irritated it, with a kind of perverse pleasure akin to that which a sick man sometimes has in irritating a wound upon his body" (Book 3: Ch. 11, In the Dark, pg. 535.)

"'What are you, I should like to know,' pursued Mr Boffin, 'that you were to have the audacity to follow up this young lady? This young lady was looking about the market for a good bid; she wasn't in it to be snapped up by fellows that had no money to lay out; nothing to buy with'" (Book 3: Ch. 16, The Golden Dustman at his Worst, pg. 578.)

"'And therefore—and therefore,' the cherub went on in a glowing voice, as Bella's hand stole gradually up his waistcoat to his neck, 'this mercenary young person distantly related to myself, refused the price, took off the splendid fashions that were part of it, put on the comparatively poor dress that I had last given her, and trusting to my supporting her in what was right, came straight to me. Have I led up to it?'" (Book 3: Ch. 17, The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins, pg. 594.)

"I'm as good a man as you, and better" (Book 4: Ch. 4, pg. 646.)

"So, she leaning on her husband's arm, they turned homeward by a rosy path which the gracious sun struck out for them in its setting. And O there are days in this life, worth life and worth death. And O what a bright old song it is, that O 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love that makes the world go round!" (Book 4: Ch. 4, A Runaway Match, pg. 656.)

"There was no time to make it longer. Time was so very precious. My dear friend Mr. Eugene Wrayburn is dying" (Book 4, Ch. 9, pg. 716.)

"My deary deary, deary girl, that Noddy and me saw married and couldn't wish joy to, or so much as speak to! My deary, deary, deary, wife of John and mother of his little child! My loving loving, bright bright, Pretty Pretty! Welcome to your house and home, my deary!" (Book 4: Ch. 12, The Passing Shadow, pg. 748.)

"I owe everything I possess, solely to the disinterestedness, uprightness, tenderness, goodness (there are no words to satisfy me) or Mr. and Mrs. Boffin" (Book 4: Ch. 14, pg. 768.)

"I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers for ever, than I was then, until there shall be written against my life, the two words with which I have this day closed this book:—THE END" (Postscript, In Lieu of a Preface, pg. 800.)

## Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast the members of the upper class and the lower class as presented in the novel. Do the members of one class seem happier than the others? Why or why not?

Several of the characters in the novel resort to trickery to get what they want. Is this ever effective? Why do the characters insist on taking this route instead of being up front, particularly John Harmon, who masquerades as John Rokesmith?

The differences in social class does not mean that only one side or another plots to harm others. Take the examples of Rogue Riderhood, Mr. and Mrs. Lammle, and Silas Wegg. What do their schemes have in common? What consequences come of the actions? Is there a difference in the consequences between the rich and the poor? Why or why not?

Money is a catalyst for many of the actions in the novel. What does money represent to the characters? Which characters seem to benefit the most from attaining a fortune? Explain your answer.

One of the main themes of the novel is rebirth, closely tied in with the imagery of water. Name several instances where this symbolism is clear. Discuss which character experience a rebirth, for good or for ill, throughout the novel.

The novel ends with a happy marriage for both John Harmon and Bella Wilfer and Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn. How do you think the couples will fare after the end of the novel? Will the social structure of London place a strain on their relationships? Why or why not?

Why was it so important for Bella Wilfer to learn that having a rich husband may not be the best answer for her? How do her friends conspire to teach her this lesson? Do you believe it was fair or kind to trick her so that she would have this realization? Why or why not?