What the Dickens?

Lesson 1: What a character!

Key Stages: KS2 – Yr 5 & 6, KS3

Term: Spring

Timing: 60 mins

This Lesson Plan has been designed to be used with either Year 5 or Year 6 at Key Stage 2 or with Years 7, 8 or 9 at Key Stage 3. Content can be adjusted according to the range of abilities within the class, to provide sufficient challenge for the most able students and to accommodate individual school lesson plan requirements. Lesson timings are approximate and can be easily adjusted.

Prior knowledge:

Awareness of Charles Dickens’ bicentenary in 2012 and some knowledge of the writer’s life and work.

Previous experience of discussing and analysing character in texts.

Objective:

By the end of the lesson students will:

* appreciate Charles Dickens’ significance as a writer;
* have developed an understanding of Charles Dickens’ skill in creating and shaping well-delineated, entertaining and revealing characters;
* have gained an appreciation of the value of copyright.

Main curriculum links:

Key Stage 2

* En1 Speaking and listening: 1a,c, 2a,d
* En2 Reading: 2a,b,d, 4a,b,c,g,h
* En3 Writing: 1a–d, 2e, 7a–c

Key Stage 3

* En1 (a) Gaining a sense of the English literary heritage and engaging with

important texts in it.

* 1.3 [Cultural understanding](http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/english/programme-of-study/index.aspx?tab=2#note2_3_a)
* 1.4 [Critical understanding](http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/english/programme-of-study/index.aspx?tab=2#note2_4_a)
* **3.2 Reading**

Other curriculum links:

Key Stage 2

* PSHCE: 1a, 4b, 4f
* History: 1a, 2a, 2b, 3, 4a

Key Stage 3

* Citizenship: Rights and responsibilities

Equipment and resources:

* Per project: IWB/projector
* Per student/group: computer access as appropriate

Preparation required:

Access to a computer, speakers and IWB/screen to show Video 1.

The assembly presentation provides a useful introduction to the module, giving an overview of Dickens’ life and copyright.

Settling activity/Starter:

Timing: 10 mins *(Timings are adjustable according to teacher preferences)*

Students research Meg Rosoff and her work e.g. *How I Live Now*, *Just In Case*, *What I Was*, *The Bride’s Farewell.* Students to use the library and internet to conduct research. A good starting point is [www.megrosoff.co.uk](http://www.megrosoff.co.uk)

Main teaching phase:

Timing: 35 mins

Students view Video 1 in which Meg Rosoff focuses on Charles Dickens’ skill in

creating some of the most memorable and impactful characters in English Literature.

Teacher leads a follow-up session in which students study an example of a key character from a Dickens’ text e.g. Gradgrind from *Hard Times* or Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol.* The extract from Activity Sheet 1 can be used orteachers may prefer to use their own extracts*.* The writer’s technique is analysed in some detail. Teacher explanation of some vocabulary may be necessary.

Discuss the concept of visualisation. Bear in mind that Dickens and his contemporaries would only have had a limited range of illustrations to use in their work. Teachers may wish to examine illustrations of some main characters from the novels as drawn by Phiz (Hablot Knight Browne – Charles Dickens’ main illustrator) and others to show the differing ways in which these characters have been portrayed.

Class discusses copyright and plagiarism. What is copyright? What is plagiarism? Class shares ideas and discusses the full extent of the damage done if and when work is plagiarised. Is the writer the only person who is damaged or do we all suffer to an extent? Why/how?

Teachers might like to refer to the copyright information at [www.gov.uk/topic/intellectual-property/copyright](http://www.gov.uk/topic/intellectual-property/copyright) to inform this discussion.

Students are then offered a choice of tasks based on character description. Students can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Teachers may wish to work on a whole class version as an introduction.

Options for tasks include:

1. Students are asked to create and develop a character and to give that character a name which reflects its attributes.
2. Students are given a name and asked to create and describe a character which embodies that name.
3. Students are given the character checklist on Activity Sheet 1 and asked to use it to create a character.
4. Students are given full character descriptions and asked to make up Dickens-style names which reflect these characters. Teachers can choose character descriptions appropriate to pupils’ ability levels etc. Examples can include:
   * an exceptionally mean man or woman
   * an easily-provoked teenager
   * a kind and generous senior citizen
   * a cruel and vengeful factory boss
   * a politician

Students in same groupings (or new groupings if preferred) create short written

sketches in which the character’s individual character traits are revealed through

incidents and/or interactions. (Teachers can help to model this process where required.)

Students then develop these notes into a piece which describes the first meeting with

the character using description and/or dialogue. Optional: students may like to add a

drawing of their character.

Teacher chooses selection of the sketches to be read out to the class.

Extension:

* Students may wish to join two or three of the classroom-created characters into a single narrative.
* Alternatively students could use what they have learnt to create a new character for their favourite book.

Plenary:

Timing: 15 mins

Hot seat session in which students take on the role of the character they have created and are asked questions by the others.

Teacher-led discussion about how each student would feel about his/her ideas for the sketches being stolen by other students or adults.

Connection to copyright abuse is made.

Homework:

Students begin to develop a character of their own in note form.