

Name _____

Date _____

Charles Dickens

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, as the second of eight siblings. When he was 12, his father was arrested for debt and thrown into Marshalsea, a notoriously grim debtors' prison in London. Dickens had to leave school and start working 10-hour days at a boot-blackening factory to support his family. His mother and siblings were imprisoned along with his father, and he visited his family every Sunday. This bleak childhood experience would later influence Dickens's writing.

Which of these best describes Dickens's life at the age of 12?

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| A. Carefree | B. Challenging |
| C. Serene | D. Unremarkable |

2. In 1827, Dickens began work as a solicitor's clerk (a legal administrator). There, he observed the characteristics and quirks of the people who came in and out of the office, forming the seeds of some of the memorable characters he would later create. Four years later, he became a journalist. Writing became his passion. He worked at a newspaper during the day and on his own stories at night. Dickens published his first story, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1833. Three years later, he began publishing monthly installments of his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*. The novel became incredibly popular; its final installment sold over 40,000 copies.

Based on the passage, which of these is true?

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| A. Dickens became a writer out of necessity, not desire. | B. Dickens was passionate about law and always wanted to be a lawyer. |
| C. Dickens explored different careers before becoming a full-time writer. | D. Dickens's first novel was not a success, but he continued writing anyway. |

3. Dickens wrote 15 major novels in his lifetime. Inspired by his childhood hardships, his writing addressed serious social issues like urban poverty, child labor, the criminal justice system, and British class structure, often with a keen satirical edge. In **Oliver Twist**, an orphan meets a gang of child pickpockets led by the greedy criminal Fagin. In **Great Expectations**, the orphan Pip unexpectedly receives money from an anonymous benefactor and moves to London, which is much dirtier and more dangerous than he expected. And in **David Copperfield**, Dickens's most autobiographical novel, the titular protagonist undergoes many trials and tribulations in his growth from youth to adulthood. He generally wrote about the struggles of common people rather than the luxuries of aristocrats. On one trip to New York, he said, "Virtue shows quite as well in rags and patches as she does in purple and fine linen." Dickens was known for creating vivid characters with memorable names, like Miss Havisham, the wealthy spinster who insists on wearing her wedding dress for the rest of her life, and the grotesquely hideous, scheming Uriah Heep. These and other characters have entered the English language as shorthand for a certain type of person, cementing Dickens as one of the greatest storytellers in history.

Which of these is NOT a recurring idea in Dickens's writing?

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| A. The exploitation of children | B. Pollution and poverty in cities |
| C. Movement between social classes | D. The superiority of noble birth |