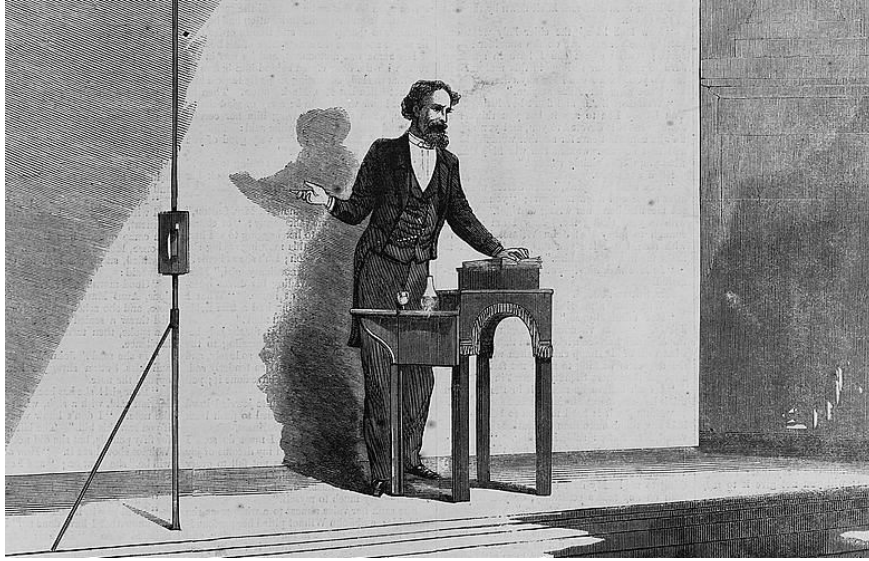


CHARLES DICKENS



ON SCREEN

Week One

Welcome to *Charles Dickens On Screen*

Week One

The work of Charles John Huffam (HUFFAM?) Dickens shares a series of blessings and curses with that of one William Huffam (I wish!) Shakespeare.

One, the sort of ubiquitous popularity that means, regardless of whether you've read/seen the work itself, you *know* something about it. You know who *Oliver Twist* is, if not from the original source, then the endless retellings, parodies and cultural touchstones it has engendered. Alas, this often convinces you *have* read it and, not wishing to repeat yourself, you never actually do.

Dickensian, like Shakespearean, is a world that denotes precisely how ingrained into our world the stories are. It summons a particular sort of England, populated by grotesques and angels alike, the names of some of whom have become nouns and adjectives in their own right. Someone can now be *a* Scrooge. And one of the notes I most often give fledging writers who have had the misfortune to have fallen under my tutelage is this: You don't have to *David Copperfield* it.

The point is, Dickens is *classic literature*. Which can trigger a rush to or away from the novels, stories and plays themselves, depending on personal inclination.

What gets forgotten is *why* Dickens is so popular – popular in its day and popular now.

The work is funny. It's rich. It has something to say. It'll make you cry (or laugh again, wicked Oscar). It can terrify. The best of the film adaptations remember all of that.

Dickens was a prose stylist of immense capacity, but he also wrote (and sometimes performed) for an audience. He wanted to *thrill* us.

Over the next 10 weeks, we'll look at some of the ways he tried.

FILMS WEEK ONE

The Pickwick Papers (1913)

Laurence Trimble

The Pickwick Papers (1952)

Noel Langley

Pickwick (1969)

Terry Hughes

The Pickwick Papers (1985)

Brian Lighthill

The Pickwick Papers (animated) (1985)

Warwick Gilbert

Doctor Who – The Unquiet Dead (2005)

Euros Lyn

The Signal Man (1976)

Lawrence Gordon Clark