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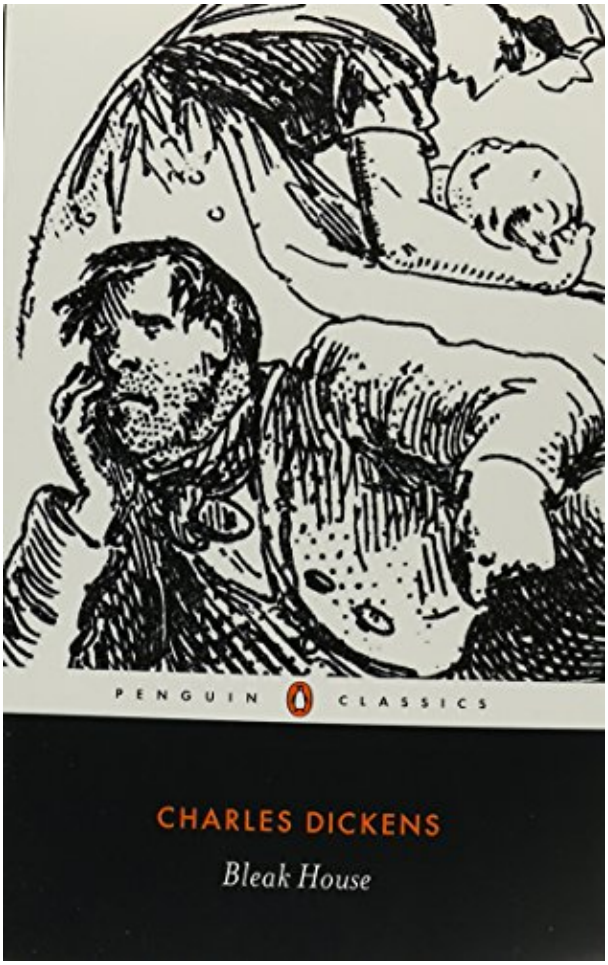

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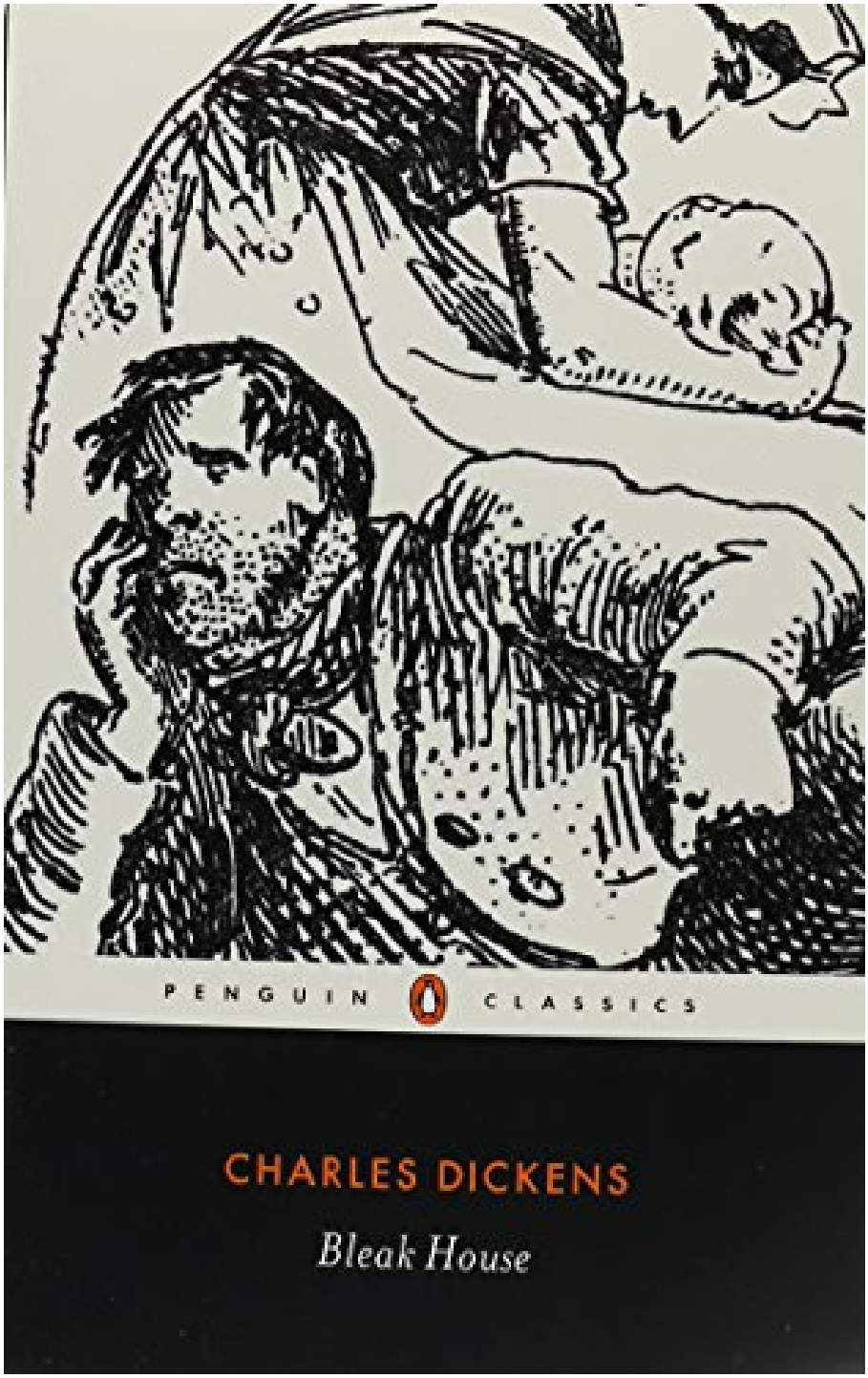

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Amazon.com Review
Bleak House is a satirical look at the Byzantine legal system in London as it consumes the minds and talents of the greedy and nearly destroys the lives of innocents--a contemporary tale indeed. Dickens's tale takes us from the foggy dank streets of London and the maze of the Inns of Court to the peaceful countryside of England. Likewise, the characters run from murderous villains to virtuous girls, from a devoted lover to a "fallen woman," all of whom are affected by a legal suit in which there will, of course, be no winner. The first-person narrative related by the orphan Esther is particularly sweet. The articulate reading by the acclaimed British actor Paul Scofield, whose distinctive broad English accent lends just the right degree of sonority and humor to the text, brings out the color in this classic social commentary disguised as a Victorian drama. However, to abridge Dickens is, well, a Dickensian task, the results of which make for a story in which the author's convoluted plot lines and twists of fate play out in what seems to be a fast-forward format. Listeners must pay close attention in order to keep up with the multiple narratives and cast of curious characters, including the memorable Inspector Bucket and Mr. Guppy. Fortunately, the publisher provides a partial list of characters on the inside jacket. (Running time: 3 hours; 2 cassettes)

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BLEAK HOUSE (PENGUIN CLASSICS) BY CHARLES DICKENS PDF

Charles Dickens's masterful assault on the injustices of the British legal system

As the interminable case of 'Jarndyce and Jarndyce' grinds its way through the Court of Chancery, it draws together a disparate group of people: Ada and Richard Clare, whose inheritance is gradually being devoured by legal costs; Esther Summerson, a ward of court, whose parentage is a source of deepening mystery; the menacing lawyer Tulkinghorn; the determined sleuth Inspector Bucket; and even Jo, the destitute little crossing-sweeper. A savage, but often comic, indictment of a society that is rotten to the core, Bleak House is one of Dickens's most ambitious novels, with a range that extends from the drawing rooms of the aristocracy to the poorest of London slums. This edition follows the first book edition of 1853, and includes all the original illustrations by 'Phiz', as well as appendices on the Chancery and spontaneous combustion. In his preface, Terry Eagleton examines characterisation and considers Bleak House as an early work of detective fiction.

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- Binding: Paperback
- 1036 pages

Features

- Bleak House

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Review
“Perhaps Bleak House is his best novel. . . . When Dickens wrote Bleak House he had grown up.” —G. K. Chesterton

Most helpful customer reviews

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.
May have been Dickens' personal favorite, but it wasn't his best
By Michele
I've been on a Dickens "kick" lately, so thought I would try David Copperfield; I read a condensed version as a child and hadn't ever re-read it since.

Having made it through this longest of Dickens' works (at least, the longest I've read so far) my conclusion is that this is evidence that bigger/longer doesn't mean better. According to Wikipedia this book was Dickens' personal favorite (no doubt because of the strong autobiographical elements) but in my opinion it is definitely not his best. It ranks better than Dickens' worst (Bleak House, Hard Times, Little Dorritt) but not nearly as good as his best (A Tale of Two Cities, Oliver Twist, A Christmas Carol, Great Expectations).

The main problem with David Copperfield? It is waaaay too long. It is the most thoughtful and contemplative of Charles Dickens' books, but at the same time it drags on interminably. Rather than have one main compelling story line, with conflict, climax, etc. that drives the narrative, David Copperfield has numerous storylines, each with their own conflict and climax, so that the reader is left weary and glazed-eyed. Rather than stuff all of them into this one overlong book, Dickens would have done better to break this book up into several books.

All that being said, David Copperfield does contain some of Dickens' most quirky, interesting and unforgettable characters. Even Dora ended up being one of my favorites, if only because she is that rarest of Dickens' characters, one who actually grows and changes (or perhaps in this case she didn't so much change, as reveal a different side of her character as the story progressed). At any event, I started out feeling neutral about her, then didn't like her, then admired her greatly.

If you're a Dickens fan then by all means read this. If you're not particularly a Dickens fan, or new to Dickens, then don't start with David Copperfield; it will wear you out and probably turn you off to Dickens entirely. Start with one of his more compelling books (those I listed above among my favorites).

I actually listened to two different audio versions of this; the first one I was unable to finish before it had to be returned to the library (and couldn't be renewed). So I purchased a second version in order to finish. In comparing the two (this version produced by Blackstone Audio vs. the version produced by Recorded Books narrated by Patrick Tull which doesn't seem to exist on Amazon) I like the narrator of the Blackstone Audio version slightly better. His characterizations are nearly as colorful as the narrator of the Recorded Books version, but he doesn't make everyone sound quite so old (particularly David Copperfield).

I will definitely listen to this again, if for no other reason than to catch the parts I missed the first time around due to my attention wandering.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
review of Bleak House
By Edwin Keck
Bleak House
by Charles Dickens 1853

It was not uncommon in those days for people to live and die while waiting for a deliberation on their court case. It brings to mind judges wearing white wigs. The story is life in the shadow of an ongoing law suit with no foreseeable end but as you will see is much more than that. Life does go on in spite of an unresolved court case. Charles Dickens is very good at developing his characters in the story and there are many of them. The plot is like a finely woven tapestry often going off in tangents. The main character is transformed from her unfortunate beginnings to becoming a respectable and beloved person. The story takes some surprising turns along the way. It is easy to see how this book is a classic.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
DICKENS MAKES FUN OF SOCIAL ACTIVISTS
By Michelle
I loved reading Bleak House. All the characters have dimension and there's love, intrigue, murder, comedy, etc. I particularly loved Dickens' portrayal of two families, the Jellyby's and the Pardiggle's. These are two "good doer" ladies who think their "social" responsibilities are more important than their responsibilities to their families. Mrs. Jellyby is so obsessed with her "social" activism that she ignores her own family and other duties. Then there's Mrs. Pardiggle, a busy body who forces her children to give their money to her "social" causes. Isn't it better when people give out of their own volition? I love how Dickens portrays them as busy bodies obsessed with their own reputation and their "good doing" is nothing but self interest. In contrast to these busy bodies is Esther Summerson. Esther Summerson is such a beautiful, loving, respectful young lady. She possesses so many good qualities that it's hard not to like her. I only wish that more women today, including myself, would behave like Esther Summerson. Now, there's a real role model for young ladies!

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