

LITERATURE – 1A

David lives with his mother and stepfather, Mr Murdstone, and Peggotty, their servant. Miss Murdstone, his stepfather's sister, is visiting. The Murdstones treat David badly.

START THINKING ...

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- How can young people be encouraged to work hard at school?
- How do you feel when you've done something wrong?
- What's the naughtiest thing you or someone you know has done?

DAVID COPPERFIELD (1850) Charles Dickens

'Mr Murdstone! Sir!' I cried to him. 'Don't beat me! I have tried to learn, sir, but I can't learn while you and Miss Murdstone are by. I can't indeed!'

'Can't you, indeed, David?' he said. 'We'll try that.'

5 It was only a moment that I stopped him, for he cut me an instant afterwards, and in the same instant I caught the hand with which he held me in my mouth, between my teeth, and bit it through.

He beat me then, as if he would have beaten me to death. Above all the noise we made – I heard my mother crying out – and Peggotty.

10 Then he was gone; and the door was locked outside; and I was lying, fevered and hot, and torn, and sore, and **raging** upon the floor.

It had begun to grow dark, and I had shut the window when the key was turned, and Miss Murdstone came in with some bread and meat, and milk. These she put down upon the table without a word,

15 **glaring** at me, and then retired, locking the door after her.

Long after it was dark I sat there, wondering whether anybody else would come. When this appeared **improbable**, I undressed, and went to bed; and, there, I began to wonder what would be done to me. Whether it was a criminal act that I had committed? Whether

20 I should be taken into **custody**, and sent to prison? Whether I was in danger of being hanged?

I never shall forget the waking, next morning; the being cheerful and fresh for the first moment, and then the being weighed down by the dismal oppression of remembrance. Miss Murdstone reappeared

25 before I was out of bed; told me, in so many words, that I was free to walk in the garden for half an hour.

I did so, and did so every morning of my imprisonment, which lasted five days.

30 On the last night, I was awakened by hearing my own name spoken in a whisper. I started up in bed, and said:

'Is that you, Peggotty?'

'Yes, my own precious Davy,' she replied. 'Be as soft as a mouse, or the Cat will hear us.'

I understood this to mean Miss Murdstone, and was sensible of

35 the **urgency** of the case; her room being close by.

'How's Mama, dear Peggotty? Is she very angry with me?'

I could hear Peggotty crying softly on her side of the keyhole, as I was doing on mine, before she answered. 'No. Not very.'

'What is going to be done with me?'

40 'School. Near London,' was Peggotty's answer.

'When, Peggotty?'

'Tomorrow.'

'Shan't I see Mama?'

'Yes,' said Peggotty. 'Morning.'

45 In the morning Miss Murdstone appeared as usual. She informed me that I was to come downstairs into the parlour, and have my breakfast. There, I found my mother, very pale and with red eyes: into whose arms I ran, and **begged** her pardon from my suffering soul.

'Oh, Davy!' she said. 'That you could hurt anyone I love! Try to be

50 better! I forgive you; but I am so grieved, Davy, that you should have such bad passions in your heart.'

They had persuaded her that I was a wicked **fellow**, and she was more sorry for that than for my going away. I tried to eat my parting breakfast, but my tears dropped upon my bread-and-butter, and

55 **trickled** into my tea. I saw my mother look at me sometimes, and then glance at the watchful Miss Murdstone, and then look down, or look away.

'Master Copperfield's box there!' said Miss Murdstone.

I looked for Peggotty, but neither she nor Mr Murdstone

60 appeared. My former **acquaintance**, the carrier, was at the door. The box was taken out to his cart, and lifted in.

'Clara!' said Miss Murdstone, in her warning note.

'Ready, my dear Jane,' returned my mother. 'Good-bye, Davy. You are going for your own good. Good-bye, my child. You will come

65 home in the holidays, and be a better boy.'

'Clara!' Miss Murdstone repeated.

'Certainly, my dear Jane,' replied my mother, who was holding me. 'I forgive you, my dear boy.'

70 Miss Murdstone was good enough to take me out to the cart, and to say on the way that she hoped I would **repent**, before I came to a bad end; and then I got into the cart, and the lazy horse walked off with it.

Glossary

rage strong anger that you cannot control

glare a long, angry look

improbable not likely to happen or be true

custody the state of being kept in prison, especially while waiting to go to court for trial

urgency needing attention very soon, especially before anything else, because important

beg to ask for something in a strong and emotional way

fellow a way of referring to a man or a boy

trickle to flow slowly and in a thin line

acquaintance someone that you have met, but do not know well

repent to be very sorry for something bad you have done in the past and wish that you had not done it

2 **▶▶1A.1** Read the text and listen.

3 Read the text again. Answer the questions.

- Why is Mr Murdstone hurting David?
- What punishments does David think he could receive?
- How does David feel when he wakes up the next day?
- What is separating Peggotty and David when they are speaking?
- How does David's mother say she feels about her husband?
- When will David see his mother again?

4 **READ BETWEEN THE LINES** Answer the questions.

- Did David plan to hurt his stepfather? Why did he do it?
- How does Peggotty feel about David?
- Who do you think Peggotty means when she talks about 'the Cat'? Why?
- What effect does Miss Murdstone have on David's mother?

5 **VOCABULARY** Complete the sentences with the correct words from the glossary in the correct form.

- At the general election in 1852, the two candidates _____ at each other when the results were announced.
- During the Victorian era, poverty was a serious issue. It wasn't unusual to see families _____.
- The River Thames starts as a _____ in the West of England.
- Young children were often taken into _____ for stealing clothes and food in the 19th century.
- Although members of the different European royal families were related, they didn't see each other often. They were more like _____ than relatives.
- In the 1850s, the population was rising. Expanding the underground system was a matter of _____.

6 Underline five words in the text that are new to you. Look them up in a dictionary and then write each of them in a sentence.

7 **ROLE PLAY** Work in pairs. David tells the cart driver what his life has been like with the Murdstones. Student A is David, Student B is the driver. Read the beginning of the conversation and then continue it with your own ideas. Use expressions for complaining and a variety of tenses.

DAVID I'm really not happy with my life at the moment. Mr Murdstone is always ...

8 **LISTENING** **▶▶1A.2** Listen to the next part of the story. Put the events in the correct order.

- David is worried about the amount of money he's spending.
- Steerforth says they share the same room.
- David tells Steerforth he doesn't want to spend his money.
- David meets Steerforth in the playground.
- All of the food is on David's bed
- David gives Steerforth the money from Peggotty's purse.

9 **▶▶1A.2** Listen again. Complete the summary. Write one word.

After a while at the school, David meets an older boy called Steerforth. Steerforth is sympathetic and says it is a ¹_____ that David was punished. Steerforth suggests that David gives him his ²_____ to look after. He then convinces David to spend his money on currant ³_____, almond ⁴_____, biscuits and ⁵_____. David didn't want to ⁶_____ the money, which was his ⁷_____. At bedtime he sees all of the food and drink that ⁸_____ bought with his money.

WRITING A letter

10 **WRITING** Imagine the scene after David has spent his first term at his new school. Write a letter from David to his mother describing what the school is like and how he feels about what happened at home. Remember to start and end the letter appropriately.

- Paragraph 1: Describe the journey.
- Describe the school (rooms, food, Steerforth, other boys, teachers, rules).
- Paragraph 3: Say how you feel about the incident and the Murdstones.

THINK LITERATURE

Bildungsroman

A *bildungsroman* is a novel which follows the protagonist (main character) from when he or she is a child until he or she is a young adult. It shows us how their character has changed in response to key events in their lives. There are usually many obstacles in their way. Some examples of *bildungsroman* include *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce.

11 Do you know of any *bildungsroman* in English or your own language? Choose a *bildungsroman* you know or one in the list and research the key events. Then present your ideas to the class.