

LITERATURE – 1B

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.

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

60 I looked for Peggotty, but neither she nor Mr. Murdstone 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.

65 'Ready, my dear Jane,' returned my mother. 'Good-bye, Davy. You are going for your own good. Good-bye, my child. You will come home in the holidays, and be a better boy.'

'Clara!' Miss Murdstone repeated.

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

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 **1B.1** Read the text and listen.

3 Read the text again. Find and correct the mistakes in each sentence.

- Miss Murdstone is hurting David because he isn't good at his lessons.
- David thinks he could be sent to prison or shot.
- When David first wakes up, he feels miserable.
- Peggotty and David are separated by Miss Murdstone when they are speaking.
- David's mother hates her husband.
- David will see his mother again at the weekend.

4 **READ BETWEEN THE LINES** Circle the correct answer.

- David spent *no time / one minute* planning to attack his stepfather.
- Peggotty compares *Miss Murdstone / David* to a cat.
- Miss Murdstone *forgives / scares* David's mother.

5 **VOCABULARY** Complete the sentences with the words in the list.

fellow | urgency | acquaintance
begging | glared | rage

- He screamed with _____ and threw all of his things on the floor.
- I've only met him once or twice. He isn't my friend, but an _____.
- You don't understand the _____ of the situation – do it now, please.
- The man was cold and hungry and was _____ for money in the street.
- Lucy _____ at her little brother with anger when he told their mum the truth.
- I've heard he is an unusual _____; we haven't met him yet though.

6 **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, complete the sentences 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 ...

DRIVER Oh really, Master Copperfield? I'm sorry to hear that. What else ...

DAVID Well, he's always ...

DRIVER To be honest, I don't ...

7 **LISTENING 1B.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.

8 **1B.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 ¹s _____ that David was punished. Steerforth suggests that David gives him his ²m _____ to look after. He then convinces David to spend his money on currant ³j _____, almond ⁴c _____, biscuits and ⁵f _____. David didn't want to ⁶w _____ the money, which was his ⁷m _____. At bedtime he sees all of the food and drink that ⁸s _____ bought with his money.

WRITING A letter9 **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.

Paragraph 2: 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.

10 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.