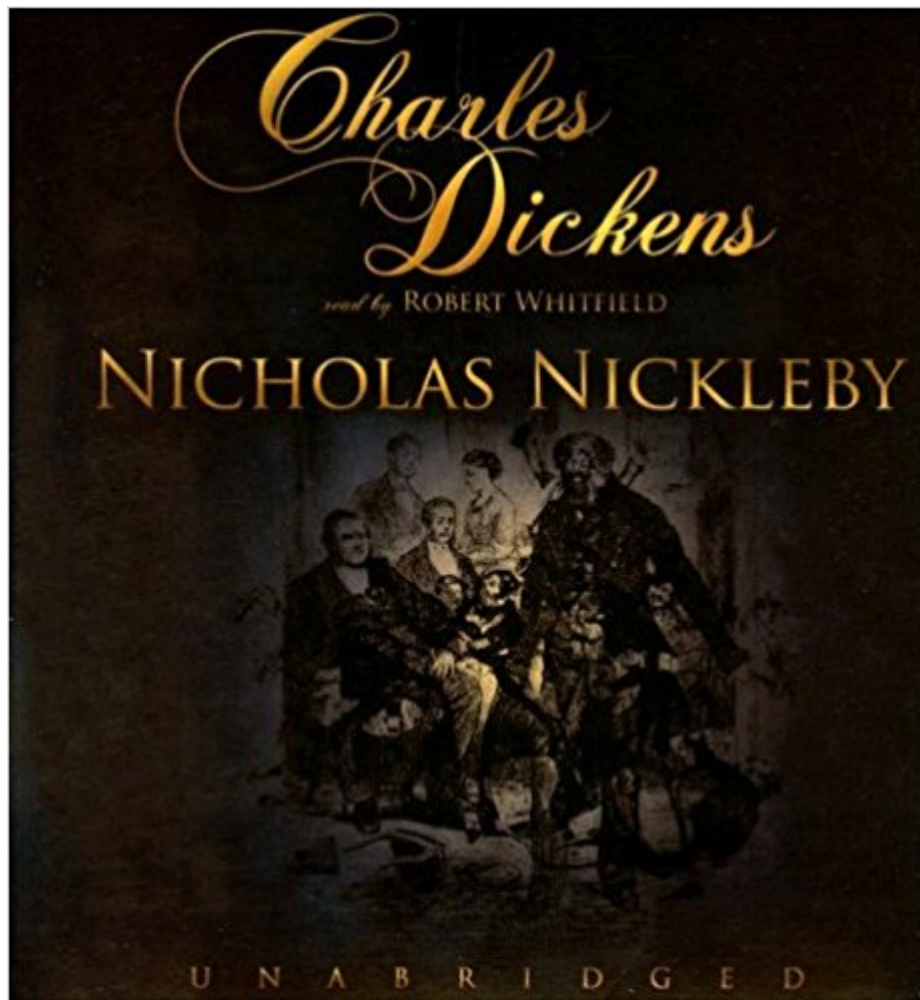


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Nicholas Nickleby



Synopsis

The most gorgeously theatrical of all Dickens's novels, *Nicholas Nickleby* mingles the somber world of *Oliver Twist* with the sunlit spectacle of *The Pickwick Papers*.

Book Information

Audio CD

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Customer Reviews

Dickens is as much a social critic as a storyteller in "*Nicholas Nickleby*," which basically pits the noble young man who gives the novel its title against his wickedly scheming rich uncle Ralph in a grand canvas of London and English society. At the beginning of the novel, Nicholas's father has just died, leaving his family destitute, and Uncle Ralph, a moneylender (specifically, a usurer) and a venture capitalist of sorts, greedy and callous by the requirements of the story, reluctantly feels obligated to help them, and does so by securing for Nicholas a position as headmaster's assistant at a school for boys in Yorkshire, and for Nicholas's sister Kate a job as a dressmaker for a foppish clown named Mr. Mantalini, while Nicholas and Kate's scatterbrained mother is left in her room to mutter incoherent reminiscences about random events in her life. This Yorkshire school, called Dotheboys Hall, turns out to be little more than a prison in the way it is run by its headmaster, an improbably cruel cyclops named Wackford Squeers who badly mistreats and miseducates the students. Now, historical records indicate that while Squeers may be an exaggeration, his school is definitely not, Dickens intending to warn his readers of the day that some such places were indeed that bad. The duration at Dotheboys Hall constitutes only a small portion of the novel, but Squeers and his grotesque family reappear throughout the rest of the story like gremlins who are always causing bad things to happen to our hero.

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