

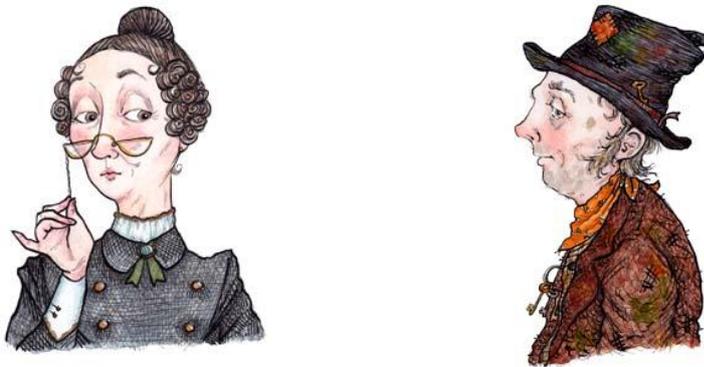
Notes for Teachers



The Mystery of Edwin Drood

When Charles Dickens died in 1870, he was exactly half way through his final novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Dickens had published the story, like all his novels, in instalments, with the first part appearing three months before he died. When he died then, he left behind a readership who had started a story without end.

In the 150 years since Dickens' death, hundreds of people have stepped forward to offer their theories on how *Drood* ends. People have written letters to the newspapers, journal articles, scholarly monographs, not to mention novels, plays, filmscripts and a musical! The death of Dickens has unintentionally made *Drood* his most accessible work: one which Dickens starts, and the reader gets to finish themselves.



The Drood Inquiry

The Drood Inquiry is a website designed to offer sleuths all the information they need. 'Case Review' offers complete scans of the original monthly instalments of *Drood*, as they first appeared in 1870, alongside a comic summary of each monthly number by our artist Alys Jones.

'Character Profiles' offers a summary of each character in the novel, while 'Clues and Red Herrings' talks through the main objects of interest that may, or may not, solve the mystery. 'Source and Inspirations' looks at the works that might have influenced Dickens when he wrote *Drood*, while 'Witness Statements' looks at what Dickens' friends and family have revealed about what Dickens told them would happen next in the story. All of these resources aim to inform people interested in Dickens' last work. Then 'The Big Questions' outlines the

main mysteries of the story, and the most popular theories. The joy of *Drood* is that no-one really knows what will happen next, so the final step on *The Drood Inquiry* is the verdict, where visitors are encouraged to vote for what *you* think will happen. You can see the results, which automatically update with each new vote.



Teaching

The open-endedness of *Drood* makes it an accessible text to readers. Children can be encouraged to think about what clues are in the text, discuss their understanding of characters, and plot out what they think might happen next.

There are two workbooks attached to offer ideas. The first workbook ‘The Mystery’ is designed to guide children through the text, if they don’t wish to read the full story by Dickens. A summary is offered of the original six parts that were written, with illustrations and prompt questions after each part to get students thinking about the story. The second workbook ‘Investigation’ asks students to conduct their own investigation with various creative exercises. You may prefer to skip the first workbook and simply ask your students to read the book, or to offer your own summary, or to find a blend of all three.

The workbooks provided here offer some ideas on how children might want to approach the mystery, but there is much more you could do if you wanted. Classes could create their own crime-scenes, or a court session. They could choose a character each and write their witness statement of events. There are lots of possibilities!

I am very happy to discuss *Drood* with teachers and/or students, either in class or through a webinar. If you would like more information, or to discuss ideas, please contact me at peter.orford@buckingham.ac.uk. If you do teach this to your students, I would love to know how they got on. One year I received a whole batch of solutions that a class of schoolchildren had written!

