***David Copperfield***

### *Chapter 22 – Some Old Scenes and Some New People*

***Summary:***

* Steerforth and David spend about two weeks in Yarmouth.
* They mostly stay together, but David hates sailing and Steerforth loves it. So, Steerforth frequently goes out at night with the fisherman while David stays over with Peggotty and Mr. Barkis.
* David also goes on long walks by himself to see the old places of his childhood.
* So, there are several days when David goes off and Steerforth entertains himself – but David doesn't know how.
* The Rookery has totally changed: the old rooks' nests have been removed, and the house has been refitted for a mentally ill man and his caretakers.
* Mr. Chillip has gotten married again and has a baby.
* David's old neighbors the Graypers have moved to South America.
* David feels fortunate to have such excellent friends as Steerforth, Peggotty, and his generous aunt.
* One evening, David comes home later than usual and finds Steerforth sitting thoughtfully by the fire in Mr. Peggotty's house.
* When David startles Steerforth when he puts his hand on Steerforth's shoulder.
* Steerforth is angry that David frightened him.
* He reproaches David for being late. He seems to be in a terrible mood.
* Steerforth wishes that he had a better soul to guide his behavior.
* David has no idea what Steerforth is talking about and is amazed at how unlike himself Steerforth seems.
* Steerforth shakes off his bad mood pretty quickly, but he does say that it would have been good for him to have a steady father figure.
* It's time for dinner, and neither David nor Steerforth knows where anybody is.
* Just then, Mrs. Gummidge comes in from the market, and explains that Mr. Peggotty is coming in with the changing tide.
* David and Steerforth walk off in the direction of Steerforth's hotel.
* Steerforth seems quite cheered up, and wishes they didn't have to leave Yarmouth the next day – he likes this seafaring life.
* David compliments Steerforth: Mr. Peggotty has told David that Steerforth is a wonderful sailor.
* Steerforth replies that he is never contented, except that he still takes pleasure in David's fresh manners.
* Steerforth tells David that he has bought a boat at Yarmouth.
* David asks when Steerforth will ever have the chance to come back here.
* Steerforth answers that he has taken a liking to the place.
* David thinks that Steerforth has bought the boat to do Mr. Peggotty a kindness, because Mr. Peggotty can use it while Steerforth is away.
* Steerforth blushes and says he doesn't want to talk about it.
* He tells David that Littimer, his servant, has come down to Yarmouth and will arrange for the boat to be properly outfitted after Steerforth leaves.
* Littimer has come down from London with a letter from Mrs. Steerforth.
* Steerforth goes a little pale at the mention of his mother. David wonders if they have had a fight.
* David's friend plans to call his new boat the "Little Em'ly."
* Steerforth notices that Ham and Emily are walking towards them.
* David looks at the couple and thinks how well-matched they are: yes, Ham looks a bit rough, but he has become a skilled workman and he looks rugged, honest, and so proud of Emily.
* Emily looks timid and shy, and won't walk arm in arm with Ham once she has seen David and Steerforth.
* Just then, a strange woman walks past David and Steerforth and follows Ham and Emily.
* They have no clue who she could be, but this woman seems to unnerve Steerforth.
* Littimer is there waiting and informs Steerforth that someone named Miss Mowcher is there.
* Steerforth is amazed: what on earth is she doing there?
* Apparently, Miss Mowcher is originally from Yarmouth.
* She wants to see Steerforth after dinner.
* Steerforth tells Littimer to invite her.
* David is curious about who this woman could be.
* About half an hour later, Miss Mowcher comes in. She is a little person of about 40 or 45 years old, very fat and with an extremely joking manner.
* Miss Mowcher name-drops a couple of people she has seen lately, and implies that she has been doing makeup for someone named Lady Mithers.
* David is truly impressed with Miss Mowcher's self-possession and cunning expression.
* David finds himself staring at her even though he knows he shouldn't.
* Miss Mowcher starts pulling out a bunch of makeup things – brushes, combs, sponges, bottles – out of her bag before she notices David.
* Steerforth introduces him, and Miss Mowcher pinches David's cheek.
* Miss Mowcher laughs at the formalities they are going through.
* She pulls out some scraps that – she claims – are the fingernails of a Russian prince, to whom she gives manicures and pedicures every week. She also dyes his hair black; it's red by nature.
* Miss Mowcher uses this example as proof that we are all humbugs: the whole social system is just a matter of appearances, and she's the one who helps people maintain them.
* Miss Mowcher gets up on the table near Steerforth, and starts examining his hair.
* She tells him he'd be bald in a year if it weren't for her potions.
* Miss Mowcher starts rubbing something into Steerforth's scalp.
* While Miss Mowcher is doing this, she starts telling Steerforth about Charley Pyegrave, a duke's son, who uses dye on his mustache. She also talks about the makeup she supplies to women to prove that appearances are all false.
* Steerforth addresses David, saying that they could show Miss Mowcher the real thing – a genuinely beautiful woman. He's talking about Emily.
* David says sternly that Emily is engaged to a worthy man, and that he admires her good sense.
* Steerforth (somewhat oddly) goes into great detail with Miss Mowcher about where Emily is apprenticed and who, exactly, she is marrying.
* Miss Mowcher listens attentively and then goes back to cutting Steerforth's hair.
* The woman then offers to cut David's hair, but he refuses. She even offers to outfit David with a fake mustache, but he says he's fine.
* Miss Mowcher bustles out after Steerforth pays her.
* Steerforth laughs hysterically once she's out of the room, and David joins him, though he's not sure if he really finds Miss Mowcher funny.
* David heads back to the Barkis home, where he is surprised to find Ham Peggotty outside.
* Little Emily is inside, and Ham is waiting for her.
* Apparently, Emily is talking to a woman who she "doen't ought to know no more" (22.173) – in other words, a woman who Emily isn't supposed to talk to.
* The woman is Martha Endell, who used to work at Mr. Omer's shop with Emily.
* She is also the shadowy woman who came up behind Ham and Emily as they were walking home.
* She's committed an unspecified crime – but probably along the lines of sex before marriage.
* Ham tells David that Martha followed them that evening to plead with Emily for help.
* Emily knew that Mr. Peggotty wouldn't approve of Emily speaking with Martha, so Emily told Martha to meet her at Mr. Barkis's home.
* Even though Ham doesn't approve of Emily acknowledging Martha either, he loves her, and accompanies her to this meeting.
* David shakes Ham's hand and they walk around outside waiting for the conversation to end.
* Finally, Peggotty beckons Ham and David to come inside.
* They find Martha sitting by the fire looking despairing; all three of the women seem to have been weeping.
* Emily tells Ham that Martha wants to go to London.
* Martha cannot bear to be in Yarmouth any more, where everybody knows what she has done and she is surrounded by people who have known her since she was a child.
* Ham gives Emily some money to pass to Martha, and Emily starts weeping again because she is moved by his loyalty to her.
* Martha kisses Emily's hand, thanks her, and then leaves.
* Emily begins to sob, and Ham tries to comfort her.
* The pretty girl exclaims that she is not so good as she should be, and she should be more grateful.
* Ham assures her that he loves her, that he is happy at the sight of her, and just thinking of Emily makes him joyful.
* Emily begs Ham, Peggotty, and even David to help her, because she wants to be a better girl than she is.
* Peggotty hushes Emily and holds her as though she were a child.
* Emily slowly calms down and straightens her appearance so that Mr. Peggotty won't know she's been crying.
* As they walk out, David sees Emily kiss Ham on the cheek and lean against him as she has never done before.

***Synopsis:***

While in Yarmouth, David visits his old home and feels both pleasure and sorrow at seeing the old places. When he returns late from one such visit, he finds Steerforth alone and in a bad mood, angry that he has not had a father all these years and that he is unable to guide himself better. Steerforth tells David that he would rather even be the wretched Ham than be himself, richer and wiser. After they leave, Steerforth reveals to David that he has bought a boat to be manned by Mr. Peggotty in his absence, and he has named it “The Little Em’ly.”

At the inn, David and Steerforth meet Miss Mowcher, a loud and brash dwarf who cuts Steerforth’s hair as they gossip and talk of Mr. Peggotty, Ham, and Little Em’ly. When David arrives at Peggotty’s, where he is to stay for the night, he discovers Little Em’ly and Ham with Martha, a woman who used to work at Mr. Omer’s with Little Em’ly but fell into disgrace and came back to beg help from Little Em’ly. After Martha leaves, Little Em’ly becomes very upset and cries that she is not nearly as good a girl as she ought to be.

***Significance:***During the visit, David stays at Peggotty's house while Steerforth stays at the inn. Because of this, they spend a lot of time apart, and Steerforth often goes out on his own with the fishermen. David often goes to visit his old house, "The Rookery." One evening, he returns to find Steerforth very upset. Steerforth will not explain why.

They discuss leaving the next day. Steerforth reveals that he has bought a boat and that Littimer has come to town as well. When they arrive at the inn for dinner, Littimer brings in a hairdresser named Miss Mowcher. She is a middle-aged dwarf who caters to the rich and famous. She gives Steerforth a hair treatment and shares some gossip about other customers.

When David arrives back at Peggotty's home, he finds Ham and Emily. Emily is having a secret meeting with Martha, a former resident of the village who has fallen into disgrace because of some unexplained sexual transgression. Emily gives Martha money to go to London and escape the shame of her hometown.

The reader begins to feel that Steerforth is up to something bad. His behavior, including his unexplained mood swings, show that he is contemplating something significant. The arrival of Littimer also arouses suspicion because Littimer's presence is also unexplained. David and the others do not feel these suspicions because they all admire Steerforth and think that he is noble because he is of a high social station.

Miss Mowcher is a strange addition. Because she does not have a normal appearance, David is not sure if he should trust her. This provides a contrast to David's automatic trust of Steerforth because Steerforth is so handsome and strong.

The scene with Emily and Martha is similar to the scene with Agnes and Mrs. Strong, in which the men in the room are uneasy about the assumed innocent girl speaking with someone who has a bad reputation.

***Analysis — Chapters XIX–XXII***

The simple life at Yarmouth contrasts starkly with the sophisticated life at Steerforth’s home. At Steerforth’s, characters use their words and actions strategically to produce a desired effect. Littimer, for example, speaks in such a convoluted manner as to be completely opaque, while every one of Mrs. Steerforth’s actions is motivated by her sense of propriety and self-possession. At Yarmouth, on the other hand, characters say exactly what they mean and act out of a desire for harmony with each other. The contrast highlights the class distinction between the two families. The description of the families contributes to Dickens’s overall message that wealth and power do not correlate with good character, and that poverty does not necessarily indicate bad character.

At home, Steerforth reveals that, at heart, he is slick, egotistical, and vain, even though David still continues to deny these tendencies in him. Mrs. Steerforth’s constant doting on her son reinforces these tendencies in Steerforth and make his self-centered nature understandable, if not justified. Though David is unaware of Steerforth’s snobbery, Steerforth belittles David from the moment they meet. Steerforth further demeans David by giving him the nickname “Daisy,” but David still is too caught up in his worship of Steerforth to see anything but his good qualities. Although Steerforth does demonstrate some thoughtfulness at Yarmouth, as when he tells David that he wishes he could be more focused, his self-reflective mood passes as quickly as it appears. David ignores Steerforth’s insults, as well as the fact that Mrs. Steerforth likes David only because he adores her son. Even when Steerforth begins to confide in David about his own insecurities, David views him as a superior being in whom all faults are positive attributes. David’s idolization of Steerforth makes him incapable of seeing the true nature of his false friend, even when Steerforth’s bad side is most exposed.

David attains greater consciousness of romantic love as his character develops. At this stage, David’s feelings of love are still impetuous and adolescent. His frivolous infatuations mirror many of the romantic relationships he sees in his life around him, like that between Annie Strong and Jack Maldon. Although David’s experience of love is not yet as deep as it is later in the novel, he is increasingly aware of others’ romantic relationships. He observes the affair between Jack Maldon and Annie Strong, as well as the unfolding of the love affair between Mr. Orem’s daughter and her sweetheart. As David awakens to romantic love, his narrative focuses more and more on the emotional relationships between characters.

***Critical Analysis(Ch21-22):***

During his stay at the Steerforth home, David is much impressed with Littimer, a servant there. "He surrounded himself with an atmosphere of respectability, and walked secure in it. It would have been next to impossible to suspect him of anything wrong, he was so thoroughly respectable," David says of Littimer.

Finally, David and Steerforth leave for Yarmouth and, arriving late, spend the night at an inn. The next morning, David goes alone to visit Mr. Barkis and Peggotty. On the way he comes to Mr. Omer's shop, which is now listed as OMER AND JORAM. David goes inside and talks to Mr. Omer, who tells him that Little Em'ly works in his shop as a seamstress and that she mixes well with the other girls — apparently because of her rare beauty and her dream of becoming a "lady."

David calls on Peggotty, who at first fails to recognize him. She takes David upstairs to see Mr. Barkis, now a rheumatic invalid confined to bed. Steerforth arrives a little later, and after dinner, he and David set out for the Peggotty houseboat. As they walk along the shore, Steerforth comments that "the sea roars as if it were hungry" for them.

They arrive just as the engagement between little Em'ly and Ham is being announced. The family is overjoyed, and the jubilant

Mr. Peggotty exclaims that "no wrong can touch my Em'ly." David and Steerforth are welcomed into the celebration, and when Steerforth leaves the Peggotty home, he remarks that Ham is "rather a chuckle-headed fellow for the girl, isn't he?" David feels a shock in this unexpected and cold comment. But, "seeing a laugh in his eyes," he thinks that Steerforth must be joking. "Ah, Steerforth! . . . When I see how perfectly you understand them . . . I know that there is not a joy or sorrow, not an emotion, of such people that can be indifferent to you."

Steerforth replies, "I believe you are in earnest, and are good. I wish we all were!"

During the visit, which lasts for more than two weeks, Steerforth spends a great deal of time boating with Mr. Peggotty, while David visits his old home at Blunderstone. The old neighbors have moved and his parents' graves have been cared for by Peggotty; David feels "a singular jumble of sadness and pleasure" about his early years here.

One evening, David is surprised to find Steerforth in a despondent mood. He does not tell David what is bothering him, but says only that he wishes "with all my soul I could guide myself better." The mood is only momentary, however, and he soon improves his spirits and tells David that he has bought a used boat, renaming it the Little Em'ly. Mr. Peggotty will be the "captain" in Steerforth's absence. David believes this to be evidence of his friend's charity toward Mr. Peggotty.

Later, Steerforth's austere and respectable servant, Littimer, arrives with a letter from Steerforth's mother. Then there is another arrival — Miss Mowcher, a fat, middle-aged dwarf, who is a hairdresser for wealthy families. Steerforth describes Little Em'ly to the dwarf as "The prettiest and most engaging little fairy in the world . . . I swear she was born to be a lady."

Later, David walks back to the Barkis house and finds Ham waiting outside for Em'ly. She is in the house talking to Martha Endell, a girl who once worked with her at Mr. Omer's. Ham explains to David that Martha Endell is a "fallen woman," and because Mr. Peggotty would not want Em'ly to speak to her, she earlier gave the girl a note telling her to meet her at the Barkis cottage. Ham gives Martha some money so that she can go to London, where she is not known. After Martha leaves, little Em'ly sobs, "I am not as good a girl as I ought to be! Not near! Not near!"

Sometimes Dickens' chapters tend to ramble; this is not the case, however, with Chapter 21. Here, he pulls together two strands of David's story — his old friends at Yarmouth and his old school friend Steerforth. Dickens takes the opportunity here to point up the simple goodness of the Yarmouth people, and he once again hints at character flaws in Steerforth.

Chapter 22, in contrast to Chapter 21, is more ambiguous. Although it is not explicitly stated, there seems to be an indication that little Em'ly has entered upon a secret relationship with Steerforth. Steerforth shows some remorse over his behavior, as evidenced by his brooding, but it is short-lived. Em'ly, perhaps seeing in the fate of Martha Endell something of her own possible fate, sobs as Martha leaves. She tells Ham, "Oh, my dear, it might have been a better fortune for you if you had been fond of someone else — of someone steadier and much worthier than me."

There is also an interesting new facet of Steerforth revealed in this chapter when Steerforth tells David that it might have been better for him (Steerforth) if he "had had a steadfast and judicious father." We have seen in Chapter 20 the excessively motherly devotion that Mrs. Steerforth has lavished upon her son; thus, by now, we should be beginning to suspect that Steerforth is not the paragon that everyone in the story believes him to be.

***Critical Study(ch19-21) :***

Steerforth's servant, Littimer, is so respectable and self-contained that he makes David feel more self-conscious than usual about his youth and inexperience. David hints Littimer will play an important role in later events. For a week, Steerforth gives David lessons in riding, boxing, and fencing, treating David "like a plaything," and David revels in Steerforth's attention. Leaving Littimer behind, they go to Yarmouth. After their arrival, David visits Mr. Omer on his way to visit [Peggotty](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/David-Copperfield/character-analysis/#Peggotty). He discovers that Mr. Omer employs Emily as a seamstress and is surprised to learn the local women dislike Emily, partly out of jealousy because she's so beautiful, and partly because they think she aspires to be a lady. David dismisses this, recalling how she had always talked about the fine things she'd buy for her uncle if she were a lady. It's been seven years since David has seen Peggotty, and they have a joyful reunion. Steerforth joins them for dinner, charms Peggotty, and then they visit Mr. Peggotty. They arrive to the news that Emily has just become engaged to Ham Peggotty. Steerforth enters into the festivities and impresses everyone with his charm and talent. Later, when Steerforth makes a derogatory comment to David about Ham, David tells Steerforth he knows he's just joking. Steerforth says he wishes everyone were as earnest and good as David is.

[David Copperfield](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/David-Copperfield/character-analysis/#David_Copperfield)'s foray into adulthood starts with a blow to his self-esteem when he loses his place on the Canterbury coach to the "shabby man with a squint." As the youngest student at Salem House, and then the youngest worker at the London warehouse, he has long aspired to be taken more seriously and to command the kind of respect his role model, [James Steerforth](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/David-Copperfield/character-analysis/#James_Steerforth), commands. David's youth and naïveté trip him up again at the hotel, where he's given an undesirable room and is intimidated by the staff. When he encounters Steerforth in the hotel, he quickly slips back into his old role. He accepts the condescending nickname "Daisy" without a quibble and is grateful when Steerforth orders the staff to give him a better room. David has always admired Steerforth's leadership and his potential for achieving great things in life, so he's surprised and disappointed to learn his friend has no intention to seek fame or success. David is so blinded by his preconceptions about Steerforth, it doesn't occur to him that Steerforth could be serious when he makes his snobbish comment about the Peggottys to Rosa Dartle. When Steerforth visits the Peggottys with him, David admires the way he charms them and seems to enjoy himself. Later, after Steerforth makes a negative comment about Ham [Peggotty](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/David-Copperfield/character-analysis/#Peggotty), and David says he knows he's joking and is actually sympathetic to the poor, Steerforth is taken aback. This is yet another clue that should show David his friend is not what he seems.

***Summary and analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) and [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth) spend a couple of weeks in Yarmouth. Since Steerforth enjoys sailing, he often goes out on the [ocean](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/symbols/the-sea) with [Mr. Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty) while David spends time with [Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty) or visits Blunderstone. David uses these excursions to return to memorable places from his childhood—most importantly, his parents' graves, where he spends time reflecting on what he will end up doing in life. The Rookery now houses only a "poor lunatic gentleman" and looks largely abandoned. In addition, some of David's old neighbors have moved away, while [Mr. Chillip](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-chillip) has remarried and has a child. Overall, revisiting his childhood home is a bittersweet experience for David, but he generally enjoys the memories once he is back in Steerforth's company.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The Rookery's new function underscores just how complete the loss of David's childhood home has been; not only is it no longer a home to David's family, but it's hardly a home at all anymore, serving instead as a makeshift asylum. Its new purpose also hints at the dangers of lingering too long on the past, since a place so central to David's memories now literally houses madness. Still, it makes sense that David returns to the Rookery as he tries to decide on a career, since the experiences he had there have helped shape him into the man he now is.

***Summary Part 2:***

Whenever [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) returns from Blunderstone, he passes by [Mr. Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty)'s house and checks in. On one occasion, he finds [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth) alone there, so deep in thought that David's approach startles him unpleasantly. Steerforth says he has been looking at the fire and, given the house's current "wasted air," morbidly imagining the Peggottys are all dead or gone. He then startles David by changing the topic and wishing he had had a father, or that he at least could "guide himself better." Continuing on, he says he would rather be poor like Mr. Peggotty or [Ham](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/ham-peggotty) than be himself. Confused, David presses Steerforth to tell him what's wrong, but Steerforth laughs his bad mood off as an eccentricity in his character, though he once more wishes he had known his father.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Steerforth's premonition of the Peggotty family's fate does eventually come true, so this passage functions as foreshadowing. What's strange, however, is the fact that while Steerforth himself is ultimately responsible for the breakup of the Peggottys, he speaks in this passage as if he can't possibly prevent it. In a sense, Steerforth truly is powerless; because he hasn't learned to master his own desires and impulses, he's not truly in control of his own life. Steerforth attributes this failure to fully grow up to the death of his father, but David also lost his father at a young age and completes the transition to adulthood more successfully. Steerforth's immaturity probably has more to do with the fact that he grew up wealthy and spoiled than anything else.

***Summary Part 3:***

Shortly afterwards, [Mrs. Gummidge](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mrs-gummidge) arrives, and [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth)'s mood further improves. He and [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) plan to depart the following day, however, and Steerforth is sad to leave the [sea](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/symbols/the-sea); although he acknowledges that his wishes are "capricious," he is enjoying his time out on the ocean. David, meanwhile, wonders aloud why Steerforth does not put one of his many talents (such as sailing) to good use. Steerforth once again admits that his interests and goals are fickle, and says that he has bought a boat to sail whenever he is in Yarmouth. David, however, assumes that Steerforth has really bought the boat for [Mr. Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty)'s benefit and is simply too modest to say so. Steerforth passes over this, saying that [Littimer](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/littimer) has arrived in Yarmouth and will oversee repairs on the boat, which he intends to name the Little Em'ly.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Steerforth's lack of self-control is partly the result of his class status. David can't understand why Steerforth doesn't turn one of his interests or talents into a career, but the simple fact is that Steerforth doesn't need to: he has enough money to drift from hobby to hobby without ever actually working. As a result, Dickens implies, he never learns the virtues that pursuing a career entails (most notably, discipline and steadiness). This is one way in which the novel's middle-class perspective colors its depiction of the upper classes: because they don't have to work, the upper classes are in some sense necessarily immoral (or at least amoral).

***Summary Part 4:***

At that moment, [little Em'ly](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/little-em-ly-emily) herself approaches with [Ham](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/ham-peggotty), who is very attentive to and protective of his fiancée. They stop and chat with [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) and [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth), and David notices that Emily does not replace her hand on Ham's arm when they continue walking. He also sees a poor and miserable-looking woman following Emily and Ham (this will later turn out to be [Martha Endell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/martha-endell)). David assumes the woman must be a beggar, but Steerforth is disturbed by the idea of her following little Em'ly, and says he had a premonition of something like this.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Despite Ham's obvious love for Emily, it's equally clear that Emily doesn't share his feelings. The fact that she's reluctant to touch him frames her unwillingness to marry specifically in terms of an absence of physical attraction. The appearance of Martha—a "fallen" woman—also hints at the role that sexuality plays in the breakup of Emily and Ham's relationship, and foreshadows what may happen to Emily herself.

***Summary part 5:***

[David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) and [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth) go to dinner, where they meet [Littimer](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/littimer), much to David's dismay. Toward the end of the meal, Littimer announces that someone called [Miss Mowcher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/miss-mowcher) is downstairs and would like to see Steerforth. Steerforth appears to know her and is excited about the prospect of introducing her to David. Littimer duly fetches Miss Mowcher, who turns out to be a dwarf. She is a talkative woman with a "rogueish" look, and immediately begins to tease Steerforth about what he is doing in Yarmouth, and whether he would think she was a "fine woman" if he saw her looking out a window (that is, if he only saw her face).

***Analysis Part 5:***

Although David himself only learns the truth later, Miss Mowcher's entire manner is a carefully crafted act. As someone with dwarfism, she has few options when it comes to supporting herself; society at large sees her as comical, so she plays to this stereotype. Her joking flirtatiousness with Steerforth also reveals how sexless and unfeminine she is in the eyes of society; the joke hinges on the supposed absurdity of anyone finding her attractive. At the same time, the fact that Miss Mowcher is perceived as unfeminine allows her to speak much more freely and boldly than a "real" woman of the time could.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Miss Mowcher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/miss-mowcher), who is a hairdresser, begins to gossip about a client she visited a week ago, but refuses to tell [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth) whether Lady Mithers dyes her hair and wears makeup. Meanwhile, [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) stares at Miss Mowcher, impressed by how cunning and knowledgeable she seems to be. Miss Mowcher, who has been setting out a variety of hairdressing supplies, suddenly pauses her work and asks who David is. Steerforth introduces him, and Miss Mowcher pinches David's cheek and teases him over his politeness. She then takes something from her bag that she says is fingernail clippings from a Russian prince and talks about how she dyes his moustache for him. She also explains that she carries the nail clippings around to advertise her business, and laughs that "the whole social system" is "a system of Prince's nails."

***Analysis part 6:***

Miss Mowcher's gossip centers mostly on the hypocrisy of her clients, who pride themselves on physical characteristics that are actually artificial. By extension, Miss Mowcher's words are also a commentary on the artificiality of society as a whole, including the class structure and gender roles that everyone perceives as natural, but are actually social constructs. In particular, her remark that the whole social system hinges on "Prince's nails" reveals how flimsy these social constructs truly are. Steerforth, however, is not self-aware enough to realize that he is also implicated in Miss Mowcher's critique, and laughs along with her.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Miss Mowcher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/miss-mowcher) gets up on a table so she can reach [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth)'s hair, exclaiming that she will kill herself if [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) or Steerforth glimpsed her ankles as she was climbing up. She then inspects Steerforth's hair, tells him he would soon go bald without her help, and begins treating him with different oils and potions. As she works, she talks about another client, Charley Pyegrave, who tried to buy a solution to dye his own hair and was asked if he wanted "rouge" (blush or lipstick). She then laughs about all her female clients who wear makeup but refuse to admit it.

***Analysis Part 7:***

On the one hand, Miss Mowcher's anecdotes about makeup tie into a lengthy tradition of associating cosmetics with female deceit and vanity. Within the context of Miss Mowcher's own experiences as a little person, however, her remarks also hint at the impossibility of perfectly conforming to the feminine ideal: women are supposed to be beautiful, but also shamed for attempting to make themselves beautiful.

Home and Family Theme Icon

***Summary Part 8:***

[Miss Mowcher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/miss-mowcher) says she hasn't seen a single pretty woman since coming to Yarmouth, and [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth) jokes with [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) that they could show her one—meaning [little Em'ly](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/little-em-ly-emily). Miss Mowcher asks whether the woman is David's sister, and Steerforth replies that she actually used to be his sweetheart. Miss Mowcher teases David about this, and David—somewhat annoyed—says that Emily is engaged, and as "virtuous as she is pretty." Steerforth agrees with David, adding that Emily is currently apprenticed at [Mr. Omer](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-omer)'s, and that she is engaged to [Ham Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/ham-peggotty)—though he (Steerforth) thinks she was "born to be a lady." Miss Mowcher says that the story should end in "happily ever after" and looks at David with "extravagant slyness."

***Analysis Part 8:***

Dickens continues to foreshadow Emily and Steerforth's affair in this exchange, not only in Steerforth's clear admiration of Emily, but also in David's defensive remark that she is "virtuous." Meanwhile, Steerforth's remark about Emily's genteel demeanor points to the contradictions involved in Victorian ideas about class. On the one hand, it suggests that certain "deserving" people ought to be able to rise socially, but it also implies that the traits that make them deserving are innate: Emily, in Steerforth's view, already is a lady who simply happened to be born to a working-class family.

***Summary Part 9:***

[Miss Mowcher](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/miss-mowcher) declares [Steerforth](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/james-steerforth)'s hair finished and asks if [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) would like his done as well. David declines, becoming embarrassed when Miss Mowcher mentions helping him to grow whiskers. Miss Mowcher climbs down, assembles her things, and leaves, but not without first joking that she will "break [David and Steerforth's] hearts" by doing so and offering to leave a lock of her hair. Steerforth then explains to David that Miss Mowcher's job gives her access to (and insight into) a large number of people, and that she is a very shrewd woman. David wants to know whether Miss Mowcher is a good person, but does not learn much from Steerforth on this point.

***Analysis Part 9:***

David's continued embarrassment over his inability to grow a beard is a product of insecurity: he realizes on some level that he is not fully mature, but is anxious to hide this from the world at large. Miss Mowcher's flirtatiousness, meanwhile, again uses her undesirability (by the narrow standards of the time) as a source of humor.

***Summary Part 10:***Later that night, [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) returns to [Mr. Barkis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-barkis)'s house only to find [Ham](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/ham-peggotty) waiting outside. Ham explains that [Emily](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/little-em-ly-emily) is inside, talking to an old friend who is now a disreputable woman. David quickly realizes that this must be the woman he saw following little Emily and Ham earlier, and learns from Ham that her name is [Martha](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/martha-endell). Martha begged Emily to speak with her as a fellow woman, but [Mr. Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty) wouldn’t allow the conversation to take place in his house. Emily therefore instructed Martha to meet her at her aunt [Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty)'s. Meanwhile, she entrusted Ham with a purse full of money, despite his disapproval of Martha.

***Analysis Part 10:***

Mr. Peggotty's (and, to a lesser extent, Ham's) discomfort with the idea of Emily speaking to Martha reveals just how strict the norms governing female sexuality in the nineteenth-century truly were. Although little Em'ly's compassion and generosity reflect "feminine" selflessness, the danger of Martha somehow infecting Emily with her own sexual looseness is so great that Emily's own actions become suspicious.

***Summary Part 11:***Eventually, [Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty) opens the door and motions for [Ham](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/ham-peggotty) and [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) to enter the house. Once inside, David sees [Martha](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/martha-endell) kneeling on the floor and [little Em’ly](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/little-em-ly-emily) standing nearby. Little Em'ly says that Martha wants to go to London, and Martha explains that doing so would allow her to avoid people who know her and her story. Ham is suspicious and asks what Martha will do in London, but Emily assures him that she will "try to do well." Ham therefore hands over the purse, and Emily gives some of the money inside to Martha, who quickly slips away afterwards.

***Analysis Part 11:***

Ham's suspicion of Martha's motives reflects the widespread belief that a woman who had transgressed sexually could never redeem herself. Dickens, however, suggests that to the extent that this was true, it had more to do with society at large than the woman's own morality: Martha, for instance, is unable to find meaningful work in Yarmouth because people know her reputation.

***Summary part 12:***As soon as [Martha](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/martha-endell) leaves, [little Em'ly](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/little-em-ly-emily) begins crying and tells [Ham](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/ham-peggotty) that she is not as "good" as she should be. More specifically, she thinks she has often been unkind to Ham, who has only ever been generous and loving to her. Ham attempts to reassure Emily that she makes him happy, but she says that that is only proof of his own goodness, and that he would be better off with another woman. Eventually, Emily turns to embrace [Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty), begging her, Ham, and [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) to help her be a better person. After a while, they are able to calm little Em'ly down, and David notices that she sticks closer to Ham the rest of the night than she typically does.

***Analysis Part 12:***

Emily's distress stems from the fact that she sees her own dark future in Martha's widespread disgrace and desperation.