***David Copperfield***

***Chapter 5 – I Am Sent Away From Home***

***Summary:***

* David's crying in the cart as they drive away when, suddenly, Peggotty jumps through the hedge next to the road and climbs onto the cart.
* She hugs David tightly, presses a purse into his hand, and then runs away.
* The carrier, Mr. Barkis, starts his driving again.
* The purse holds a bit of money and note: "For Davy. With my love" (5.4). Seeing this, David starts weeping yet again.
* Mr. Barkis tells David that they will only be going as far as Yarmouth, where David will catch a coach to his final destination.
* Then, David offers Mr. Barkis a piece of cake.
* Mr. Barkis eats it and asks if it was made by Peggotty.
* David answers yes, Peggotty does all of their cooking.
* Mr. Barkis asks if Peggotty has any sweethearts – suitors.
* David says, no, so far as he knows, Peggotty has never had a boyfriend.
* Mr. Barkis wonders if David will be writing letters to Peggotty. David says, yes, of course.
* The carrier asks David to include a message in his next letter to Peggotty: "Barkis is willin'" (5.35).
* But Mr. Barkis won't clarify what, exactly, he's willing to do.
* Mr. Barkis and David arrive at a totally unfamiliar (to David) inn at Yarmouth.
* David introduces himself as Copperfield, then as Murdstone, to the lady at the inn, who agrees that a dinner has been bought for him.
* He settles in for dinner with a waiter who, while seeming like a nice guy, still manages to steal David's food, ale, and dessert right out from under his nose.
* Then, the waiter brings David ink and paper, which he plans to use to write to Peggotty.
* The waiter scares David half to death with stories of boys being beaten at school – boys of exactly David's age, between eight and nine.
* The waiter also manages to guilt David into giving him a giant tip.
* David gets into a public coach bound for London.
* Having supposedly eaten so very much (when it was really the rascally waiter), David feels annoyed that he's now the butt of a lot of jokes between the coachman and the other passengers about his appetite.
* The coach carries David to an inn in the Whitechapel district, where he is left behind.
* Nobody there is expecting a boy called Copperfield, from Blunderstone, Suffolk.
* David feels incredibly isolated: what if no one comes to pick him up? What will he do?
* Finally, someone comes to the inn office: a thin young man with lots of stubble and a poor suit of clothes. This guy is one of the teachers at Salem House, David's new school, and he has come to fetch David.
* David and this teacher agree to stop on the way to the school so that David can get something to eat.
* They pause at a housing complex for poor women; they enter a small apartment where an elderly woman greets the teacher as, "My Charley!" (5.114). (We find out later that his name is Mr. Mell.)
* The apartment is terribly cold and poor and meager, but the elderly woman still has enough to cook up some breakfast for David.
* The woman asks Mr. Mell – whom David calls "the Master," because he is a master, a.k.a. a teacher, at Salem House – to play the flute a bit.
* Mr. Mell does, but the music is awful – his music is terribly sad and dismal.
* Eventually, a friend comes by, another elderly lady: Mrs. Fibbitson.
* Mrs. Fibbitson agrees with his mother that Mr. Mell plays the flute beautifully – which is totally not true, but does spare his mother's feelings.
* David soon nods off to sleep to the sound of this awful flute.
* He sleeps right through the subsequent coach ride to his new home, Salem House.
* This school is incredibly grim looking.
* The door of the school is opened by a man with a wooden leg (who, we later learn, is named Tungay), who tells Mr. Mell that the cobbler (read: a shoemaker) has been by the house, but hasn't been able to fix his boots.
* Mr. Mell is clearly really bummed.
* David notices that Mr. Mell's shoes and socks both have holes in them.
* David also learns that he's there during the school's holiday season, so there are no other boys on campus.
* Even the owner of the school, Mr. Creakle, and his family aren't there.
* David goes into an empty schoolroom, where he finds a little sign that says, "Take care of him. He bites" (5.136).
* Mr. Mell comes up behind David and asks what he's doing.
* David asks if there is a dog around that he should be careful of.
* Mr. Mell says the sign's not for a *dog*, it's for *David*: they have been warned that he bites.
* Mr. Mell apologizes for having to start out with David in this way, but he has to put the sign around David's neck.
* This sign does terrible things for David's confidence: he becomes paranoid that people think he really does bite.
* As David explores the school in everyone's absence, he sees that a lot of the boys have carved their names in an old door to the playground; he tries to figure out what kind of people they are from the way they carve their names.
* Mr. Mell and David both have long lists of chores to do, but David gets through them because he has nothing else to do.
* David also spends a lot of time with Tungay, who acts as a kind of caretaker to the building. He's pretty mean to David; he won't let him turn his sign so that no one can see it.
* Mr. Mell is never cruel to David, though he doesn't talk to him much. David thinks Mr. Mell likes having company.

***Brief Summary:***

David begins his journey to London to attend his new boarding school, Salem House. As the carriage is about to leave, Peggotty appears to give him money and food for his journey. She rides with him for a little while in order to comfort him. When Peggotty leaves, the carriage driver, Mr. Barkis, asks David about her and hints that he would like to begin a courtship with her.

After arriving at the transfer point, David is at the mercy of those around him, who are looking to trick him out of his money or food. What follows is an uncomfortable journey to London, where David is left waiting at the station for someone to pick him up. Finally, Mr. Mell, one of the teachers at Salem House, meets him. On the way to the school, Mr. Mell and David stop at a charitable institution to get something to eat. While there, David finds out that Mr. Mell's mother lives at this charitable institution and has some mental problems.

On arriving at the school, David discovers that it is closed for a holiday period. While he explores the grounds, he examines the graffiti left by other students and wonders about how he will be accepted by them.

***Brief Analysis:***

The mysterious insistence of Mr. Barkis confuses David, but Mr. Barkis does continue to pursue a relationship with Peggotty. The ease with which people take advantage of David will also continue as he learns how much to trust other people, particularly strangers.

David's arrival at Salem House also presents hints at what is to come. What David knows about Mr. Mell's mother will have a negative impact at some point in the future. The names that he reads in the student graffiti, especially the names of Tommy Traddles and James Steerforth, foreshadow the relationships he will have with those two boys.

***Critical Study(Ch 4-5):***

David rides away with a carrier, Mr. Barkis, who travels between towns carrying people and packages in his cart. As David leaves, Peggotty bursts out of the bushes and gives him a little money, a note from his mother, and several cakes. David is nearly hysterical at being sent away. He shares the cakes with Mr. Barkis, who, on finding out that Peggotty baked them, asks David to tell her that “Barkis is willin’.”

At the inn where David switches to the London coach, dinner is waiting for him under the name “Murdstone.” The waiter tricks David into giving him all his dinner and some of his money as a tip. Because it is a large dinner, David gains a reputation at the inn for having eaten a tremendous amount. The coachman and the other passengers tease David so badly that he does not eat even when they stop later to do so. As a result, David arrives in London very hungry.

In London, David waits for several hours until Mr. Mell, who says he is one of the masters at Salem House, arrives to pick him up. On the way to the school, they stop at a charity home and visit an old woman who calls Mr. Mell “my Charley” and cooks David breakfast. They proceed to the school, where all the boys are on holiday. David is forced to wear a sign that identifies him as one who bites—his punishment for having bitten Mr. Murdstone.

When the horse cart is a safe distance from Blunderstone, Peggotty bursts from a hedge and stops the cart to give David money and a note from his mother: "For Davy. With my love." Later, Mr. Barkis, the horse cart driver, asks David some questions about Peggotty and then asks him to tell her "Barkis is willin'." At the inn at Yarmouth, William, the friendly waiter, tricks the unsuspecting David out of the meal that's been ordered for him and eats it himself. David takes the London coach and arrives the next morning tired and hungry. When no one is there to meet him, David wonders if he's been purposely abandoned in London, and he begins to plan what to do to survive on his own. Finally, Mr. Mell, one of the masters at his school, arrives to take him the rest of the way. Before leaving London, they stop at an almshouse (poorhouse) where Mr. Mell visits his mother. David arrives at Salem House during the holiday break, so all the boys are away. He's made to wear a placard on his back with the warning "Take care of him. He bites." David awaits the arrival of the other boys with dread.

***Critical Analysis(Ch 1 – 5):***

The novel is narrated in the voice of [David Copperfield](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield), Jr., who begins by describing the circumstances of his birth. He was born in Blunderstone Rookery, the name of his house, in Suffolk on a Friday, and he let out his first cry just as the clock struck midnight. A nurse present at his birth claimed that, because of these circumstances, David was destined to be unlucky in life and to have the gift of seeing ghosts (the latter prophecy has yet to come true). Furthermore, he was born with a caul, which his mother, [Clara Copperfield](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list#clara-copperfield), tried unsuccessfully to sell and was later auctioned off for a low five shillings.

On the day that he was born, David's mother was surprised by a visit from David's aunt, Betsey Trotwood, known as either [Miss Betsey](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list#miss-betsey) or Miss Trotwood. She is a strong, eccentric woman who has had troubles with marriage. Miss Trotwood had been completely against the marriage of David's father to his mother because of the enormous age difference between the two. However, she supports Clara because she wants a chance to help raise a girl, even asking if she could name her future niece Betsey Trotwood Copperfield. Miss Trotwood storms out in a huff as soon as the doctor tells her that the baby is a boy, and she disappears from David's life for quite a while.

David now discusses his earliest memories. These are the youthful shape and beauty of his mother and the stronger, larger figure of [Peggotty](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list" \l "peggotty), technically the family's maid but more like a member of their family. He turns to the happy memories of his youth: one of the three of them sitting in front of the fire in the parlor, and one of Peggotty intently listening as David reads to her from a book about crocodiles.

These happy memories are interrupted by the appearance of a tall, dark, handsome man to whom David takes an immediate disliking. Although young David does not appear to understand immediately what is going on, it is clear that Clara has become romantically interested in this new stranger. Peggotty and Clara have several arguments that end in tears all around. Peggotty obviously doubts the intentions of the man. A trip that David takes with this man, [Mr. Murdstone](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list#mr-murdstone), proves that her doubts certainly have a foundation. During the trip, Mr. Murdstone and his companions speak of his "bewitching the pretty widow," and they even laugh at David's naivete. David repeats what he has heard to his mother, but she refuses to believe him,. The relationship between Clara and Mr. Murdstone grows stronger.

One day, Peggotty suggests to David that they go visit her family for a week in Yarmouth, and he eagerly agrees, although he is concerned about what his mother will do in the meantime. He quickly accepts Peggotty's obviously fake excuse that she will be staying with their neighbor, Mrs. Grayper, and the two leave. After a long, slow carriage ride, directed by a slouched-over, passive carrier, the pair are met in Yarmouth by [Ham](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list#ham), Peggotty's nephew, who had been present as a young boy at David's funeral. He has now grown into a strong young man with a youthful face, and he takes them to the house of Peggotty's brother, who is called Mr. Peggotty. The house is actually a beached black boat that has been refurnished to serve as a home. Also living in the home are Mrs. Gummidge, Mr. Peggotty's sister-in-law, who tends to experience bouts of depression, and little Em'ly, Mr. Peggotty's beautiful niece, who is around David's age. Although she is shy at first, she and David very quickly fall in love with one another and spend many afternoons taking long walks on the beach and collecting shells. David learns that the fathers of both Ham and little Em'ly drowned at sea, as did Mrs. Grummidge's husband, and Mr. Peggotty generously took them in, although he hates to admit the generosity of his actions. David enjoys his stay immensely and has trouble parting with everyone, especially little Em'ly. Still, the closer he gets to Blunderstone Rookery, the more excited he is to go back home.

Unfortunately, David returns to a home that has completely changed. He finds that, while he was gone, Clara and Mr. Murdstone were married. This completely changed the atmosphere of the house. Mr. Murdstone is a controlling, emotionally and mentally abusive husband. He stresses to Clara the idea of firmness, and he makes it clear to David that if he does not act the way Mr. Murdstone expects, he will be beaten. He takes away most of Clara's authority, and any authority she has left disappears when Mr. Murdstone's sister, Jane, comes to live with them. Jane takes the house keys away from Clara, and when she tries to fight against this action, the Murdstones team up to make her look rude and ungrateful and thus reduce her to tears. After this, Clara does not fight anymore. She is no longer the fun, affectionate mother David once knew. She sneaks in hugs and loving comments only when she knows the Murdstones are not around.

The Murdstones also put David through strenuous lessons, giving him massive amounts of information to memorize. His mother is his apparent tutor, but both of the Murdstones are always present during his recitations. This puts much pressure on David, leading to poor performance. One day after a particularly bad lesson, Mr. Murdstone takes David up to his room to beat him. Out of instinct, David bites him, leading to a beating more terrible than he has ever experienced. After a month of seclusion as punishment, it is decided that David should be sent to boarding school in London.

David goes by coach to Yarmouth, where he will be met by another coach to take him to London. After tasting one of Peggotty's cakes, which she sneaked to David after he had gone about half a mile from the house, the carrier, [Mr. Barkis](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list#mr-barkis), asks David to send Peggotty the message, "Barkis is willin'." David does so. David starts the uncomfortable coach ride to London. When he arrives, he is picked up by a master of Salem House, Mr. Mell. When they arrive at the school, David finds out that he has arrived during a break and the other boys are gone. David also learns that he must wear a sign on his back that says, "Take Care of Him. He Bites." He spends the week of vacation studying with Mr. Mell, being yelled at by the gate guard (a man with a wooden leg), and wondering what the other boys will do when they see his sign when they get back.

Analysis

The start of the first chapter foreshadows the morose tone of the rest of the novel. According to narrative convention, it is obvious that David’s life will be full of sadness and misfortune because a nurse has predicted it. At the same time, being born with a caul is a symbol of good fortune. One relevant belief is that babies born with a caul are safe from drowning, a very prevalent form of death in this novel. Cauls are also said to indicate psychic ability, although, as David mentions, he has yet to see any such thing.

In the beginning chapters, David is setting a standard of true happiness. He finds his childhood to be the time of his fondest memories, as can be seen by the beautiful scenes with him, his mother, and Peggotty sitting and laughing by the fire. [David Copperfield](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list#david-copperfield) is often read as a narrative on the pursuit of happiness; in this reading, these childhood memories can be seen as constituting the kind of true happiness David seeks to recover throughout the novel after he loses it to his mother's marriage to the dark, controlling Mr. Murdstone. This happiness is characterized by love, family, freedom from care, comfortable leisure, and wonder (reading the book about crocodiles).

It is also clear from these beginning chapters that Dickens does not think very highly of fathers, or he at least shows resentment about his own father. He portrays the family in a bright, happy way when there is no father figure present. As soon as Mr. Murdstone steps in as a stepfather, however, things become awful in Blunderstone Rookery.

Mr. Murdstone does not represent fathers or males in general, however; Mr. Murdstone is uncharacteristically distasteful and controlling in the family. With Jane, he usurps power in the household and leaves David’s own mother with practically no power or rights in the house. Murdstone’s name suggests his muddy, crappy (*merde*) personality and his stone-cold treatment of Clara, unlike a father and husband in a truly happy family. It is no wonder that he causes stress and anxiety in David’s life, and when he goes too far, no wonder that David fights back. David’s severe and prolonged punishment, seclusion and then banishment to a boarding school, is another example of Mudstone’s personal failures as a father figure.

Even so, Dickens suggests that there is something wrong with a society in which children who are deemed to be problems can be swept away into a boarding school and forced to wear signs warning others to beware. The warning that David “bites” is a stigma much like that of the “A” worn by the adulteress in [The Scarlet Letter](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-scarlet-letter).

Another interesting instance of foreshadowing can be found in David and Peggotty's visit to Yarmouth. It is there that readers first see the ocean and, through the stories of Ham, Little Em'ly, and Mrs. Grummidge, are introduced to drowning, a mode of death that will become prominent throughout the rest of the novel.

Finally, it is important to look at how David handles the anticipation of the arrival of the other boys to Salem House. He is particularly concerned about his sign; he will need allies against teasing. David will immediately pick out [Steerforth](https://www.gradesaver.com/david-copperfield/study-guide/character-list" \l "steerforth) as one of the strong ones, foreshadowing the control and respect that Steerforth will command throughout the novel. David has been thrust into an unfamiliar world, and his anticipation shows that the way his first extended stay away from home develops will either give him hope or push him to a point of despair from which he may not recover.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[**Barkis**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-barkis) and [**David**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) are soon intercepted by **[Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty)**, who embraces David and gives him a bag of cakes and a purse with a few coins in it. Barkis and David then continue on, David moved by Peggotty's generosity. Barkis explains that he is taking David to Yarmouth, and—despite his generally "phlegmatic" demeanor—questions David closely about Peggotty: whether she made the cakes, whether she has a sweetheart, and so on. Finally, he asks David to tell her that "Barkis is willin'" the next time David writes to her.

***Analysis 1:***

Although Barkis's courtship of Peggotty is mostly played for laughs, it's telling that Barkis becomes interested in her after eating one of the cakes she's made. *David Copperfield* ultimately suggests that romantic relationships need to be based in part on practical considerations, and Peggotty's skill as a cook (and housekeeper in general) is one example of that.

***Summary part 2:***

[**David**](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) and **[Barkis](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-barkis)** arrive at an inn in Yarmouth. David is nervous and overwhelmed as he sits down to dinner, and the waiter manages to trick him out of most of his food and drink, as well as one of the three shillings **[Peggotty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/peggotty)** gave him. Nevertheless, the waiter is friendly and warns David about the school he is going to be attending: a boy close to David's age had two of his ribs broken there.

***Analysis Part 2:***

David's first solo excursion into the world highlights just how naïve and inexperienced he is: he believes the waiter, for instance, when he says that only someone used to the inn's ale (that is, the waiter) can safely drink it. Although it happens under unhappy circumstances, David in some sense "needs" to leave home in order to become more worldly and knowledgeable.

***Summary Part 3:***

After dinner, [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) is transferred to a coach, where the other passengers make fun of him for supposedly eating so much. As a result, David is afraid to eat anything when the coach stops for supper, and goes hungry. They then travel through the night, and David wonders what is going on inside the houses they pass. As they approach London the next morning, David fantasizes about the city and imagines that the plots of his favorite stories are unfolding there.

***Analysis Part 3:***

David's curiosity about the houses he passes stems from his own recent experiences, which have dramatically undercut the Victorian ideal of home as a calm and happy refuge from the outside world. David now wonders whether these other houses might contain children in circumstances similar to his own. Meanwhile, his memories of the books he has read and his efforts to transplant those stories to London continue to foreshadow his future career.

***Summary Part 4:***

The coach finally stops at an inn in Whitechapel, but no one is there to meet [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield). He waits anxiously in the booking-office, wondering whether [Mr. Murdstone](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-murdstone) intends for him to simply be abandoned there. Eventually, however, a young man (later identified as [Mr. Mell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-mell)) with a somewhat rundown appearance comes to collect him, introducing himself as one of the teachers at Salem House. David explains that he has not had anything to eat recently, and the teacher says that he can buy breakfast on the way, since he wants to stop to pay a visit to someone anyway.

***Analysis Part 4:***

David's fears at the booking-office reveal just how starkly his life has changed since his mother's remarriage: he is now in danger of effectively being orphaned while one of his parents is still alive.

***Summary Part 5:***

After [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) has made his purchases, he and [Mr. Mell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-mell) arrive at an almshouse for poor women. Here, they visit with two old women, one of whom is implied to be the teacher's mother. After cooking David's food for him, she asks the teacher to play on his flute. He does so (badly), and David dozes for a while.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The fact that Mr. Mell has to hide his mother's poverty speaks to how limited the prospects were for members of society's lowest classes. Although Mell himself has managed to attain lower-middle class status as a teacher, his lower-class background threatens to undo even that moderate success.

***Summary Part 6:***

[David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) and [Mr. Mell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-mell) leave the almshouse and board a coach, where David again falls asleep. When he wakes up, the two walk the rest of the way to Salem House, which David describes as looking "very dull." A man with a wooden leg lets them in, and returns a pair of boots to the teacher, which he says were too worn for the cobbler to repair. David and the teacher—now identified as Mr. Mell—enter the school, which is largely empty: it is the holidays, and both the students and [Mr. Creakle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-creakle), the headmaster, are away. David then describes the schoolroom Mr. Mell shows him at length, noting its dirtiness and generally "forlorn and desolate" appearance.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Although Mr., Mell's job as a teacher gives him a measure of respectability he would not enjoy doing "unskilled" labor, it clearly doesn't pay well: he can't afford a new pair of boots, and has been wearing the old ones for so long that they can't even be repaired. Given the state of the classroom, however, it's equally clear that the school isn't spending its money on educating its students well. In fact, Mr. Creakle basically views his school as a business venture, which Dickens (a proponent of education reform) suggests undermines the role that education ought to have in shaping young people's minds and characters.

***Summary Part 7:***

[David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) finds a placard in the room that reads, "Take care of him. He bites." David assumes that there must be a dog somewhere nearby, but [Mr. Mell](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-mell) apologetically explains that David must wear the placard on his back—presumably, Mr. Murdstone has asked the school to punish David by making his "attack" on Murdstone public knowledge. From that point on, David is hyperaware of what the placard must look like to the school's employees and servants, and worries that the other boys will mock him when they arrive; he comes across a door several students have carved their names into, and tries to imagine how each boy will respond to the placard.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Like the beating Mr. Murdstone gave David, the placard David is forced to wear speaks to the novel's ideas about how children learn and develop. Although the placard certainly makes an impression on David, it does so by undermining his confidence. By contrast, the people, events, and experiences that end up contributing to David's growth do so by drawing out positive character traits and providing him with a more solid sense of himself as independent and purposeful.

***Summary Part 8:***

The month [David](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/david-copperfield) spends waiting for his classmates to arrive is unhappy. He does well at his studies with [Mr. Mell,](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/david-copperfield/characters/mr-mell) and strikes up a kind of friendship with him, despite the teacher's eccentricities. He is lonely and frightened, however, and constantly ashamed of the placard.

***Analysis Part 8:***

David's ability to make good use of his studies with Mr. Mell, despite the less than favorable circumstances, is a sign of his ability to turn even his worst experiences into opportunities for self-improvement and growth.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

As they looked at [Mrs. Mell], I looked at her also. Although it was a warm day, she seemed to think of nothing but the fire. I fancied she was jealous even of the saucepan on it; [...] The sun streamed in at the little window, but she sat with her own back and the back of the large chair towards it, screening the fire as if she were sedulously keeping it warm, instead of it keeping her warm, and watching it in a most distrustful manner. (5.119)

***Explanation:***

This is a very, very brief look at the life of Mrs. Mell, Mr. Mell's mother, who lives in the nineteenth century equivalent of a homeless shelter. Her extreme poverty seems to make her mistrust the most ordinary things in life, such as having a fire and being able to cook on it. What tone does David use to describe this scene? How does he seem to feel about Mrs. Mell's poverty? Does this description remind you of other moments in the book when David confronts similar poverty?

***Quotation 2:***

I gazed upon the schoolroom into which he took me, as the most forlorn and desolate place I had ever seen. I see it now. A long room with three long rows of desks, and six of forms, and bristling all round with pegs for hats and slates. Scraps of old copy-books and exercises litter the dirty floor. Some silkworms' houses, made of the same materials, are scattered over the desks. Two miserable little white mice, left behind by their owner, are running up and down in a fusty castle made of pasteboard and wire, looking in all the corners with their red eyes for anything to eat. A bird, in a cage very little bigger than himself, makes a mournful rattle now and then in hopping on his perch, two inches high, or dropping from it; but neither sings nor chirps. There is a strange unwholesome smell upon the room, like mildewed corduroys, sweet apples wanting air, and rotten books. There could not well be more ink splashed about it, if it had been roofless from its first construction, and the skies had rained, snowed, hailed, and blown ink through the varying seasons of the year. (5.135)

***Explanation:***

This is David's first encounter with Salem House. This also could not be a more beautiful illustration of the way David uses setting and scenery to establish mood and character development. We know that Salem House is going to be a bad school because it is filled with a "strange unwholesome smell." We know that it is going to be like a restrictive trap for its students because there is a bird "in a cage very little bigger than himself" who won't even sing. We also know that the emphasis of this school sure isn't going to be on learning, because the schoolroom smells of "rotten ink."

***Quotation 3:***

What I suffered from that placard, nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I always fancied that somebody was reading it. It was no relief to turn round and find nobody; for wherever my back was, there I imagined somebody always to be. That cruel man with the wooden leg aggravated my sufferings. He was in authority; and if he ever saw me leaning against a tree, or a wall, or the house, he roared out from his lodge door in a stupendous voice, 'Hallo, you sir! You Copperfield! Show that badge conspicuous, or I'll report you!' The playground was a bare gravelled yard, open to all the back of the house and the offices; and I knew that the servants read it, and the butcher read it, and the baker read it; that everybody, in a word, who came backwards and forwards to the house, of a morning when I was ordered to walk there, read that I was to be taken care of, for I bit, I recollect that I positively began to have a dread of myself, as a kind of wild boy who did bite. (5.145)

***Explanation:***

The experience of having the whole world looking at David's sign – "Take care of him. He bites." – inspires David with this morbid sensitivity about the whole world's interest in him. He suddenly becomes horribly aware that he is seen by many strangers throughout the day. This awareness of social judgment makes David feel unfounded guilt "as a kind of wild boy who did bite." This sense that social judgment increases a sense of guilt gets repeated in the episode of poor Mrs. Annie Strong, who is so aware that the world thinks she is cheating on Doctor Strong.