



Reading Level 1: Charles Dickens
07/02/2012

Topics: books, reading, social change

Learning topics:

- vocabulary
- some / any
- infinitives and modal verbs
- possessive

1	Charles Dickens was born 200 years ago today. The Prince of Wales and the actor ¹ Ralph Feinnes went to a
2	ceremony in London. Charles Dickens started to write his books in the 1830s. People are still reading them
3	today. Do you know any of his books? You probably ² know the names of some of his characters.
4	
5	One of Dickens' most famous ³ books is 'Oliver Twist'. It describes some of the bad conditions ⁴ in homes for
6	children and in inner city London. Do you know the name 'Oliver Twist'?
7	'A Christmas Carol' is a story about a factory ⁵ owner ⁶ who does not care for ⁷ any of his workers.
8	The main character in the book is called 'Ebenezer Scrooge'. The moral of the story is that people should be
9	responsible ⁸ for each other. His most popular ⁹ book, called 'David Copperfield', tells the story of a poor ¹⁰ boy
10	as he grows up in a difficult world. It is probably similar ¹¹ to some parts of Charles Dickens' own life.
11	
12	This was a time of lots of social change in Britain. It was the start of modern democracies that try to help the
13	poorest people. During Dickens' lifetime, the population of London went up from one million to three million.
14	People had to re-think some of their ideas about poverty ¹² .
15	
16	Dickens' books told people about the poverty in parts of England like London and Yorkshire.
17	But his books were popular because of the detailed descriptions of interesting characters.
18	Before, there weren't any popular books about poor people.
19	The books helped to inform the political discussions in Britain, and then to improve ¹³ the working conditions
20	in factories and the rights of poor people.
21	
22	Dickens was very famous and became rich within his lifetime. He never stopped writing about the poor and
23	also helping them. For example, he supported ¹⁴ some projects that helped young women in London.
24	When he died in 1870, people were travelling by steamships and railways instead of ¹⁵ horses.
25	Technology changed, and so did society ¹⁶ . His books helped to change society in Britain.
26	Today, a lot of people in Britain remember him for his social work as well as his place as one of the most
27	popular writers of all time.
28	
29	Will you read any books by Charles Dickens this year? Perhaps you might see a play ¹⁷ or TV film of his books.

¹ actor = Schauspieler

² probably = wahrscheinlich

³ famous = berühmt

⁴ condition = Zustand, Bedingungen

⁵ factory = Fabrik

⁶ owner = Besitzer

⁷ to care for = sich um jdn kümmern

⁸ responsible for = verantwortlich für

⁹ popular = beliebt

¹⁰ poor = arm

¹¹ similar to = ähnlich wie

¹² poverty = Armut

¹³ improve = verbessern

¹⁴ support = unterstützen

¹⁵ instead of = stattdessen

¹⁶ society = Gesellschaft

¹⁷ a play = (Theater)stück



Level 1 questions

Some / any

1. 'some' and 'any' mean the same thing in English (*einige*) but they are used at different times. Look at the lines 3, 5, 7, 10, 18, 23 and 29.

Can you find the rule about when to use 'some' and when to use 'any'?

Infinitive and modal verbs

2. A verb has different forms, but the start is the 'infinitive'. In English, this is often in the form 'to _____'. The main verb in a sentence is written in a tense (1st form = present, 2nd form = past). When there are two verbs in a sentence, the second verb normally is the infinitive.

a) Look at line 2, at the sentence 'Charles Dickens....' Find the first verb and then the second verb.

b) Can you find more examples?

c) Can you find any exceptions¹⁸?

3. A modal verb (can/must/will/should/might/may/could/would) is always followed by a main verb. The second verb is like an infinitive, but without the 'to'.

a) Can you find examples of a modal verb and then an infinitive?

Possessive

To form the possessive (~ *the book of John*), in English we say *John's book* – with an 's' after the word. This is **not** a plural, because of the apostrophe.

When a word already ends in an s (like *Dickens* or a plural like *sisters*) then we don't write another s. (*not Dickens's*). We keep the apostrophe: *Dickens'*. This means *the book of Dickens*.

Listen to how it is said, and you can hear the second 's'!

Answers

1. 'Some' is for positive sentences. *I can see some flowers.*

'Any' is used for negative sentences. *I can't see any flowers.*

For questions, 'any' is the normal form. *Can you see any flowers?*

But, if the answer will be 'yes', then we can use 'some' in a question: *Can you see some flowers?*

2. a) the first verb is 'started' (1st form) and the second verb is 'to write' (infinitive form)
b) there are examples in lines 12, 14, 19 and 25.
c) an exception is in line 22: 'he never stopped writing'.

Sometimes the -ing form is used as a second verb – but you can learn the rules later!

3. a) there are examples in lines 8 (should be) and 29 (will...read / might...see)

¹⁸ exception = Ausnahme