

# David is Born



*Mama hugs her new, baby boy. "I'll call you David Copperfield," she said.*

- Preview:**
1. Read the name of the story.
  2. Look at the picture.
  3. Read the sentences under the picture.
  4. Read the first four paragraphs of the story.
  5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that David's father

- a. did not want a son.
- b. wanted a little girl.
- c. was proud of his new child.
- d. was not present at David's birth.

*Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.*

**Now read the story.**

Read to find out why David leaves home.

# David is Born

"It's a boy!" the doctor cried at my birth. As the clock struck twelve, my cries could be heard through the night.

"Someone is mistaken," Aunt Betsey said, "it *must* be a girl!" And angrily, she disappeared into the night's darkness.

"Bad luck to be born so late at night," said a helper.

But Mama hugged me close, whispering, "Your papa would have been proud. I'll call you David Copperfield, after him."

Papa died before my birth, but still I was happy. I loved our house, the Rookery, and my mama. I loved our servant, too. "Away from those sweets!" our servant, Peggotty often shouted. But she loved us like family.

One day a man with great black whiskers visited. "He be Mr. Murdstone," Peggotty said. She thought he was bad. I didn't understand just why, but I sensed he was not nice. One day, I asked Mama for a hug. "Now, now, Clara," her new companion said. "Do not hug David. He does not need hugs. What he needs is a stong hand!" How could Mama like him when he was so jealous of me?

One morning Peggotty said, "Come along now, Master Davy. You're coming to my house for awhile."

"But Mama can't live alone," I told her.

"She's staying with a friend," Peggotty explained. But there were tears in Mama's eyes as she waved good-bye. Soon I forgot about Mama and the awful Mr. Murdstone. "Over there's my brother's house," Peggotty said, pointing to a barge by the bay.

"This boat is his *house*?" I asked. "It's wonderful!" I even liked the fishy smell. Her brother, Mr. Peggotty, was a fisherman. He loved all who shared his funny

house. With them lived an orphan girl, little Emily, and an orphan boy, Ham. Ham was older than Emily. He was six feet tall, with strong arms used for hard work. Little Emily wore blue beads and had beautiful hair. I could tell that Ham loved Emily.

On the beach one day, Emily told me the ocean scared her. She feared her uncle would die there, as had her father. "When I become a lady," she told me, "we'll all move to a beautiful palace far away." She skipped along a sea wall, the high waves hitting against the stones.

Very scared, I screamed, "Please stop, Emily! You'll drown!" But Emily just laughed. "Let's look for sea shells," she called. Later, she kissed me. Just then, I knew I loved Emily, even with her strange ways.

My two-week visit with Peggotty passed quickly. "But I don't want to leave," I cried, with a shiver. I thought of Mr. Murdstone's mean face.

"It be time," Peggotty said, "so don't be a baby."

"I'll miss you," I told Emily. We waved to each other as the carriage headed toward the Rookery.

At home again, a strange servant greeted us. I cried, "Where's Mama?" Something was terribly wrong; I could feel it! My legs began to shake, and I cried, "Has Mama died?"

"Quiet," Peggotty said, adding seriously, "your mother has remarried." Then Mama's arms were around me, and I hugged her very hard.

"Clara," said Mr. Murdstone, "now don't forget. Boys need a strong hand." I felt Mama shiver as she showed me to my new room. It was far from the one she shared with her new companion.

I hated Mr. Murdstone, so I often stayed with Peggotty in the

kitchen. But sometimes, even Peggotty seemed angry. I missed the old, happy Mama who now did *exactly* as Mr. Murdstone directed. It was *his* fault that Mama had changed. One day, in anger, I pushed Mama away.

"Davy, my child! What's wrong?" she cried.

Mr. Murdstone jumped up and snapped, "Do you know how I treat a bad dog should he misbehave? He gets the whip!"

The next months I passed in quiet fear. My mother jumped to do all that Mr. Murdstone told her. I was too unhappy to learn my lessons as I should have. "I can't learn anything!" I screamed at Mr. Murdstone.

Whiskers sticking out, he dragged me upstairs as I begged, "Don't beat me! Please, I'll behave!" His angry eyes burned with hate, and he tightened his hold. When I couldn't escape, I went wild and I bit him! His heavy hand hit me again and again. Then he left me, hurt and unhappy.

I remained in my room for five days. I received meals there, and ate alone with no visitors. Once, a servant came to take away some of my clothing and shoes. Had I broken the law? Perhaps I would be hanged! Then came a whisper at the door. "Peggotty?" I asked.

"Davy," she said, "be as quiet as a mouse, or the cat will hear!" I knew she meant Mr. Murdstone. "How's Mama?" I asked.

Peggotty cried softly. "You'll see her tomorrow...before you go away."

I stood frozen for a moment. "Away?" I asked, my heart beating wildly.

"Yes," Peggotty replied... "to a London school."

Her words hit me like a hammer. I would be leaving the Rookery. My tears began to fall.

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## COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

- David was born at
  - twelve o'clock.
  - ten o'clock.
  - three o'clock.
  - seven o'clock.
- Aunt Betsey was hoping that the new child
  - would stop crying.
  - would be born in the morning.
  - would be a girl.
  - would look just like her.
- David's father
  - had died right after David was born.
  - had died before David was born.
  - was alive and well at the Rookery.
  - was Mr. Murdstone's good friend.
- Mr. Murdstone
  - was kind to young David.
  - did not treat David kindly.
  - let David do whatever he wanted.
  - gave David lots of hugs.
- Why do you think Mr. Murdstone was jealous of David?
  - David was named after Clara's first husband.
  - David looked just like his father.
  - David got everyone's attention.
  - He thought Clara loved David more than him.

### Preview Answer:

d. was not present at David's birth.

- Why did Peggotty take David to her house for awhile?
  - To care for him while his mother went away with Mr. Murdstone to get married
  - To show David the funny house she lived in
  - To teach David how to fish
  - To meet Emily and Ham
- David did not like Mr. Murdstone, so he spent a lot of time with Peggotty. What was it that David missed most about his mother?
  - The games they used to play together
  - The way she used to sing to him
  - Seeing her happy
  - Watching her bake cookies
- David froze with fear when he learned that
  - Mr. Murdstone was going to London.
  - Mama and Mr. Murdstone were going away.
  - he would be leaving the Rookery.
  - Mama almost died.
- Another name for this story could be
  - "Troubles For Young David."
  - "David Learns to Fish."
  - "Clara's New Companion."
  - "Looking For Sea Shells."
- This story is mainly about
  - David's new orphan friends.
  - Peggotty's kindness.
  - a young boy's troubled life.
  - what happens to David when his mother gets married again.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.

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