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Opening extract from  
**Charles Dickens:  
Scenes from an  
Extraordinary Life**

Written by  
**Mick Manning  
Brita Granstrom**

Published by  
**Frances Lincoln  
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For the inimitable Elizonza Home Roberston

1938 - 2010

JANETTA OTTER-BARRY BOOKS

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Charles Dickens was born on 7th February,  
1812. He became one of the greatest writers who  
ever lived. Yet he never wrote down his own life  
story. In fact he kept details of his childhood secret  
for many years. Eventually he did talk, revealing  
that many of his characters and exciting stories,  
especially *David Copperfield*, were based on events  
in his own life.

By respectfully borrowing from his own words:  
conversations, letters, quotes and writings, as well  
as his own children's fond recollections, Mick and  
Brita have invited Mr Dickens to show you some  
of the scenes from his extraordinary life.

# Charles Dickens

SCENES FROM AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE



Mick Manning & Brita Granström

F  
FRANCES LINCOLN  
CHILDREN'S BOOKS



Charles Dickens was born into an age of war and revolution. . .



when war against France still raged, the Prince Regent ruled and the future Queen Victoria hadn't even been born.



In the early 1800s Britain was in a state of change. . . The inventions of the Agricultural Revolution meant machines now did the work of many farm labourers. Thousands lost their jobs - and the homes that went with them.



Thousands of families crowded into towns, working in the mills, mines and factories of the Industrial Revolution. Child workers did many dangerous jobs while others were forced, by hunger and poverty, into crime. These were the people Charles Dickens would one day feel such sympathy for and write about.



John Dickens was a wages clerk for the Royal Navy. This job moved him and his family from place to place around the shipyards near London. Elizabeth Dickens had a talent for comic voices and taught her son to read at an early age.

### BABY DICKENS - 1812

In which Charles Dickens is born in Portsmouth, England

I was born on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life these pages must show. . .





### HAPPY DAYS – 1821 In which young Charles first performs in public

In Chatham I told a story so well and sang small comic songs so especially well, that I used to be lifted by my father on to the chairs and tables of local inns to display these talents. I blush to think now, what a horrible little nuisance I must have been to many grown-ups who were called upon to admire me!



In 1817 John Dickens was posted to work as a pay clerk at Chatham Docks. Sometimes he would take Charles and his sister Fanny with him around the noisy shipyard, and even sail past the old prison hulks.



The Dickens family lived next to a small theatre in Sheerness for a while. Songs came thumping through the thin wall – and the whole family would often join in!



Dickens and his father sometimes walked past Gad's Hill Place. Many years later, in 1856, Dickens returned and bought that very same house.