

DICKENS'S DAVID COPPERFIELD: NOVEL AND FILMS

"Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." So opens Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1850), his most autobiographical narrative, which we will contextualize by reading some letters, the autobiographical fragment, and perhaps an essay or two. We will ask how retrospective narration shapes self-writing and how autobiographical writing also produces the self.

The films of *David Copperfield* update Dickens's tales for twentieth-century audiences. How does the reader's perspective on Dickens's story change, when he or she becomes a spectator? Does it matter whether you've read the novel when you see the film? Why do we love—or hate—film adaptations? We'll ask how screenwriters change a novel's story, how directors cast their films and photograph their stars, how the camera frames the scene. We'll watch two "older" versions, each faithful to Dickens in its way; we'll follow with a brand new version, *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (dir. Armando Iannucci (2018), whose casting, for example, leaps out immediately as "unfaithful." What does Iannucci achieve with this change? During our classes, we'll watch selected film clips, read short essays, and look at Victorian illustrations.

Please buy the edition I list here, so we will all be "on the same page" in discussions. I'll ask Labyrinth to order them; they'll be shelved behind the checkout counter. (Pandemic bound? Labyrinth is doing easy *curbside pick-up & delivery; call first.*) Please purchase DVDs or stream films; Princeton Public Library owns all but Iannucci.

- Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Oxford World's Classics), \$8.95.

Reading schedule:

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| Week 1: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 1-9 |
| Week 2: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 10-18 |
| Week 3: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 19-27 |
| Week 4: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 28-37 |
| Week 5: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 38-46 |
| Week 6: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 47-57 |
| Week 7: | <i>David Copperfield</i> , Chs. 58-64 |
| Week 8: | <i>Watch at home, then discuss: George Cukor, David Copperfield</i> (1935); Simon Curtis, <i>David Copperfield</i> (BBC, 1999); Armando Iannucci, <i>Personal History of David Copperfield</i> (Film 4, 2018) |

LEADER: Dianne Sadoff is a professor emerita of English and former director of Cinema Studies at Rutgers University; she has also taught at Antioch College, Colby College, the University of Southern Maine, and Miami University of Ohio.

TUESDAYS: 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., 8 weeks beginning September 28 through November 16

MAXIMUM: 22