**As you read this article and the other two you are provided, please highlight important details and information about Dickens’ life and annotate in the margins with your own questions, inferences, predictions, evaluations, judgments, and connections. When you are finished, on your “Reading Like a Reader” chart, you should ask at least 2 questions, make at least 2 inferences (even though the author doesn’t say it, I know…) and 2 predictions, connect with at least 2 different portions of text, make at least 2 judgments/evaluations, and complete a 5-7-sentence summary after reading. You will use these annotated texts for the text-dependent analysis essay after you read the play.**

Charles Dickens: Childhood

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born February 7, 1812 in Portsmouth, England. He was the second child of John and Elizabeth Hoffman Dickens. His parents went on to have five more children to join Charles and his elder sister, Fanny, two of whom died in infancy.

The Dickens family was on shaky financial ground from the beginning. John Dickens did not have a particularly good head for numbers or finance, which was rather unfortunate, since he worked as a clerk in the Naval Pay Office. (He also dabbled in journalism, which influenced his young son but failed to bring the family much income.) The family moved frequently. By 1823, things had gotten bad enough that Dickens's parents were forced to withdraw him from school because they could no longer pay the fees.

The following year, 1824, was a nightmare for the whole Dickens family. On February 9, two days after his twelfth birthday, Charles was sent to work at Warren's Blacking Factory, a London operation that made the polish for boots. That same month, John Dickens was sentenced to Marshalsea Prison for his failure to repay a debt. Though young Charles tried desperately to raise the money to keep his father out of jail, on February 23 John Dickens reported to prison. The entire family – with the exception of Charles, who was still working at the factory, and his older sister Fanny – moved in to John's prison cell.

You don't have to be a Dickens expert or a psychologist to see how deeply this experience affected Charles Dickens and influenced his fiction. The blacking factory was a miserable place. Living alone at a boarding house while his family was in prison was more than the sensitive 12-year-old Charles could bear. His depression and anxiety contributed to his sickly constitution. In May, John Dickens received an inheritance and was able to arrange to have the debt paid off. The family moved in together again at the boarding house where Charles had been living. By June 1824 he was able to go back to school at Wellington House Academy.

Charles Dickens never got over his terror of poverty. Nor did he ever forget the deprivations he endured during his family's crisis. Scenes from the factory, the boarding house, and the debtor's prison all peppered his fiction. Even as an adult, he could not pass the site of the old factory without crying. After his mother objected to his returning to school, saying that he should continue to work to support the family, he was never able to forgive her. "I do not write resentfully or angrily, for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am," he wrote after becoming a successful novelist, "but I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back."