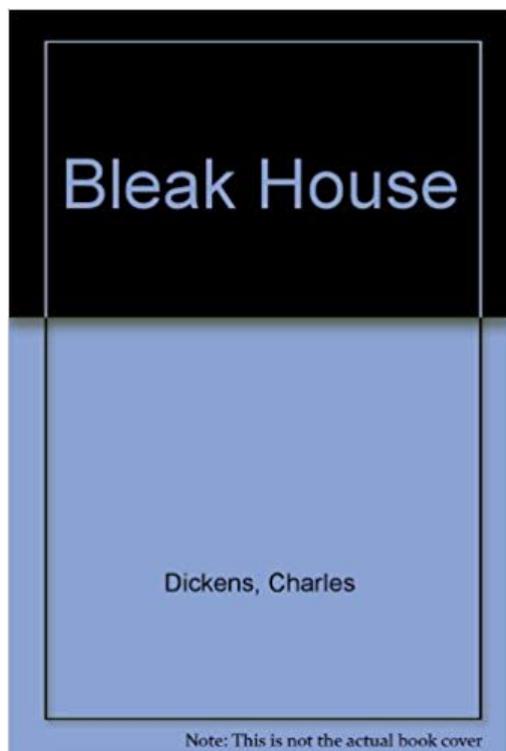


## Bleak House *by* Charles Dickens



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Reviews of the **Bleak House** *by* Charles Dickens

Narder

If you're looking for a reading edition of \*Bleak House\*, as far as I am concerned, this is the one to get.

More than most Dickens novels, this one needs annotations if you're really going to understand the target of the satire: the pre-1852 English Chancery Court. Yes, you do get the basic idea without fully understanding the historical background, but the novel is much richer if you do. The Norton annotations in this regard are uniformly concise and helpful. The many allusions (both to high and low culture) are also glossed, and while you may be well-versed enough in the Christian Bible to do without some of these, Dickens' reading otherwise was highly idiosyncratic -- to the point that even the most well-read consumer is probably going to need a hand from time to time (e.g., Dickens will allude very specifically to a line from something like Milton's \*Comus\* instead of one of the more important works). As to the popular culture, I defy anyone other than a time traveler or historian specializing in the period to identify references to popular songs, ballads, etc. without some one pointing them out. That the annotations appear at the bottom of the page -- rather than forcing you to flip to the back -- is a welcome bonus.

As for the other features of this edition, the critical apparatus (comparing differences in various editions that appeared within Dickens' lifetime) is unlikely to interest anyone other than specialists, but there are other, more helpful features for the general reader. There is a very good introduction to the Chancery Court (oddly missing from the Modern Library edition -- which otherwise uses the same base text and contains the same annotations if you need a hardback edition), some helpful primary documents about some of the topics that inform the novel, and (like all Norton Critical Editions) a small sampling of excerpts from critical essays (usually several decades old) which are sometimes interesting, but almost always superseded by more recent scholarship.

The trade paperback binding is flexible and durable --allowing you to lay the open book on a flat surface without immediately cracking the spine. You could even read it this way so long as you're not doing silly things like mashing the book completely flat. Though the pages might be fractionally thinner than some may prefer, it does help to keep the bulk down in such a lengthy novel (saving shelf space, as well as making it easier to handle while reading). The type is high enough contrast with the page so as not to cause undue eyestrain, and the font is not minuscule to save space. This edition does include the illustrations by Phiz (Hablot Browne), which are essential as far as I am concerned.

Bottom line: this is a quality, useful edition of one of Dickens' most important novels, and while I appreciate the look and feel of quality hardbacks like the lovely Nonesuch editions, I primarily buy books to read -- not to look attractive on the shelf. I would avoid non-trade paperbacks (good luck not cracking the spine for such a long novel), cheaply bound trades that are likely to begin falling apart after one reading, or hardbacks that don't include at least cursory notes (unless you really are buying more for the look and feel -- I would suggest the leather spines and sewn bindings of the Nonesuch for this).

Enone

This was the early 1800's. How could one expect it Not to be bleak, although the house, Bleak House, is the antithesis of bleak. A great "series" and pretty realistic. I've read a few reviewers talk about Downtown Abbey as good but Bleak House as dark and bleak. No kidding. It's the 1800's and if you didn't have money life was pretty horrendous. Also, Downton Abbey was the early 1900's, 50+ years later than is shown here.

Downton Abbey, although a favorite, it is very detailed and realistic for the rich, with little to no realistic reflection of the details of poverty other than what's shown of the downstairs workers.

Gillian is good but has the same 3 looks used over and over. I get she's lived a tortured life and has made decisions, i.e. marrying her husband, for her own survival and welfare but we really don't get to see much beyond the one dimensional presentation of her living an unhappy rich life.

The other characters are far more interesting only because they've fleshed out their characters. Sadly I was unaware of the history and although I knew it was Season 1 in 2005, I believed there was a Season 2. So, I'd not realized when it's done, it's done. No more.

It should really be presented as a Mini-series.

I won't ruin it for those who haven't seen it, so I'll only say I really liked watching however I thought the last 30-60 minutes could have been done better.

Jarortr

It's not Austen, and it's not Bronte. It's Dickens and it's great. Andrew Davies, BBC, and the all-star cast did an amazing job. Glad I finally got the chance to watch it. I highly, highly recommend.

Especially if you can understand that Dickens is severe compared to Austen and gritty compared to Bronte (both Bronte sisters); and especially if this severity and grittiness does not turn you off. From some of the negative reviews, I think some were expecting the lightness of Austen. This is definitely not that. And as always, the cinematography is once again outstanding in this BBC production as the last several years have been.

Anyshoun

I have never thought of Bleak House as Charles Dickens's best novel, but this series is the best film treatment of a Dickens novels since Alistair Sims's Christmas Carol. The acting is superb and subtle, allowing for thoughts to be conveyed without words. The parts of the book which critics, and sometimes with justice, called sentimental are here transformed into very moving and controlled scenes. I cannot recommend this series too highly.

Ndlaitha

Terrific production. Andrew Davies adaptation of the Charles Dickenson classic confirms what an extraordinarily gifted screenwriter Davies is. The casting is a gift unto itself with the BBC's most talented actors in each and every role. The sets and costumes are wonderful and really add another dimension to the story. The stellar portrayals by the cast bring the ring of truth to the story as it reflects the many faces of the human condition. We feel the characters hopes, fears, longing, joy, and desperation. We witness, both circumstantial and inherently, the kindness and malice that is human nature. A moving, intriguing, and thought provoking screen production of a truly great literary work. While Jillian Anderson is young to be cast as Anna Maxwell Martin's mother, Anderson's brilliant performance overrides the closeness in age between the two actresses portraying mother and daughter. One of the best dramatic videos I've seen in a long time.

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