

Format for a *Bleak House* "Reading Note"

This format adopts the Working Notes that Dickens used to help conceive and compose individual instalments of Bleak House (and his other novels) for the purposes of reading and 'digesting' those individual instalments. Spend some time on the Dickens Notes website (www.dickensnotes.org) to learn about how Dickens used the Notes (and look at some examples from Bleak House or any other novel). You should follow the format outlined below, but there are an infinite number of ways to work within this format – figure out what kind of note-taking practice best supports your reading and engagement with the course.

On the left-hand side of each Working Note, Dickens made memos related to the instalment more broadly; these included questions/ideas about which characters to include or introduce, as well as memos about broader developments of plot and theme.

While the right side of your note is for digesting individual chapters, use the left side to think about the instalment as a whole, and how it relates to the novel-in-progress. After you finish reading, use the top of this side to reflect upon the instalment as a whole: what is distinctive about it? what gets introduced or developed? At the bottom, keep track of and reflect upon at least three larger issues, themes, and developments. You can think about questions or 'mysteries' that the instalment introduces or develops, as well as broader thematic developments. You can even guess what might happen next...

<i>space for notes about what is specific or new about the instalment as a whole</i> ----- <i>space for notes about the novel's plot and themes as they develop instalment-by-instalment, as well as questions (or guesses!) about what might happen next</i>	<u>Heading</u> <i>(e.g., "Bleak House Number V")</i> <i>The right side of your note should contain chapter by chapter notes & details</i>
--	--

Reading Note Format

On the right-hand side of each Working Note, Dickens made memos for each chapter in an instalment – these include brief notes about key plot events, character appearances or connections, and even key images, objects, or quotations.

Your Reading Note should mirror this structure by keeping notes for each chapter in the instalment – these might include simple summaries of key events, character introductions or developments, important quotations, or even images (or any other feature of the novel that seems interesting to you!)