

QUICK CARD: *BLEAK HOUSE*



Reference	<i>Bleak House</i> . Dickens, Charles. (1853) ISBN: 978-0141439723
Plot	Esther Summerson, born in shameful circumstances to a mother she has never known, struggles to submit to her circumstances, discover her identity, and find love. Meanwhile, the weakness of her mother and the intrigues of powerful, unsympathetic men threaten her quiet life with public scandal.
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England: London and its surrounding suburbs • Chesney Wold , ancestral home of the Deadlocks • Bleak House, blighted ancestral home of beneficent Mr. Jarndyce • Chancery Court • New Bleak House
Characters	<p>As is common in Dickensian novels, there are too many colorful characters to list in this brief reference! Characters significant to the plot follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esther Summerson, protagonist born to “submission, self-denial, [and] diligent work” who resolves to do right and “win some love” if she is able. Companion of Ada Clare • Mr. John Jarndyce, Esther’s benefactor • Ada Clare, ward of Jarndyce • Richard Carstone, ward of Jarndyce and husband of Clare. He dreams of inheriting wealth • Lady Dedlock, Sir Leicester Dedlock’s wife whose shadowy past haunts her. Esther’s mother. Lover of Nemo. • Sir Leicester Dedlock, Lady Dedlock’s wealthy husband • Mr. Tulkinghorn, vulture-like powerful lawyer who handles the Dedlock affairs. He threatens Lady Dedlock with blackmail. • Inspector Bucket, the PI who investigates Lady Dedlock’s affairs for Tulkinghorn, and eventually investigates Tulkinghorn’s murder • Mr. William Guppy, Esther’s suitor, he is the first to discover her past • Captain Hawdon (aka Nemo), the deceased law writer who is discovered to have been Lady Dedlock’s lover and the father of their illegitimate child, Esther • Mademoiselle Hortense, Lady Dedlock’s jealous French maid, who aids Tulkinghorn in his blackmailing efforts until, cheated and enraged, she murders him, casting suspicion on Lady Dedlock • Mr. Woodcourt, Esther’s love interest, a good and upright doctor • Mrs. Jellyby, pietistic Christian do-gooder whose family and home lie in shambles while she devotes herself to her “mission” • Mr. Jellyby, her beleaguered husband <p style="text-align: right;">www.centerforlit.com</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caroline Jellyby (aka Caddy), whom Esther befriends • Jo, orphan who aids Lady Dedlock in her search for Captain Hawdon, and who later is responsible for infecting Esther with smallpox • Mr. Krook, illiterate proprietor of the establishment where Nemo lodged. Victim of spontaneous combustion. He, too, works to obscure information for personal gain. • Mr. George Rouncewell, owner of a shooting establishment and the once rebellious son of Mrs. Rouncewell • Mrs. Rouncewell, the loyal head housekeeper of Chesney Wold • Grandfather Smallweed, wheelchair bound miser and moneylender who berates his family and plots to undo Mr. George. • Mr./Mrs. Snagsby, law writer who subcontracts work to Nemo • Mr. Vholes, a preying lawyer in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case who bleeds Richard Carstone dry
Conflict	<p>Man vs. Man Man vs. Self Man vs. Fate</p>
Theme	<p>The contrary nature of appearance and reality The just reward of duty and character The folly of “free money” The corruption of justice in the legal system</p>
Literary Devices	<p>Foreshadowing – the steps in the courtyard of Chesney Wold Symbolism – ie Miss Flite’s birds, the mural on Tulkinghorn’s ceiling, even Bleak House itself.</p>