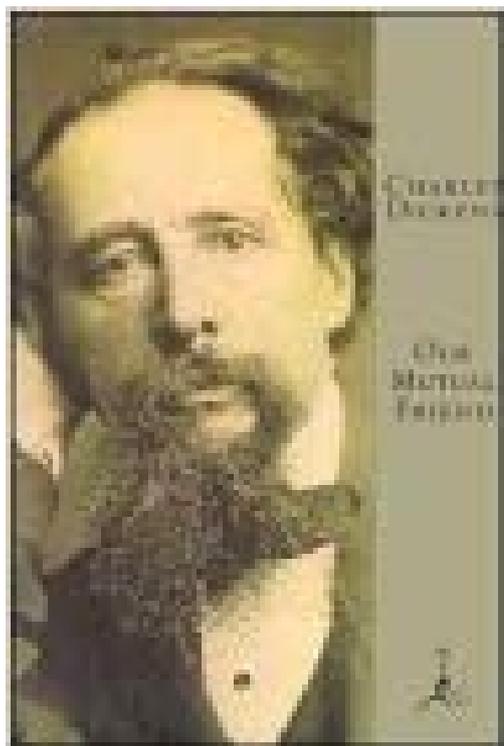


## Our Mutual Friend Our Mutual Friend Our Mutual Friend *by* Charles Dickens



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## Reviews of the **Our Mutual Friend Our Mutual Friend Our Mutual Friend** *by* Charles Dickens

**Venemarr**

I love Dickens! And, I thoroughly enjoyed this audio edition of the book; the reader was fantastic with his many voices and his great inflections; he did a superb job.

Having said that, however, I need to add that I wish I had listened to the unabridged version, even though it's much longer. Here's why: some of the characters are missing in this version. And, of course, some of the little plot twists are not covered. While I love listening to audio books (it makes exercising so much more tolerable!), I need to remember that where Dickens is concerned, it's best to listen to the entire book...I mean, what's the hurry when I need to keep exercising anyway??!?!?!?

Now, about the book itself; it is not my favorite. For me, the characters were not as intriguing as they are in Bleak House - still one of my favorites. The plot line is not as engaging.

However, true to form, Dickens has some of the most classic lines ever written; as in, "Why ain't you ugly?" Now, that caused me to laugh out loud!

Or how about this section: "As is well known to the wise in their generation, traffic in Shares is the one thing to have to do with in this world. Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares. Have Shares enough to be on Boards of Direction in capital letters, oscillate on mysterious business between London and Paris, and be great. Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any principles? Shares. What squeezes him into Parliament? Shares. Perhaps he never of himself achieved success in anything, never originated anything, never produced anything? Sufficient answer to all; Shares. O mighty Shares!"

Or the lovely heroine, Bella who proclaims: "I have made up my mind, Pa, that I must have money. And I feel that since I cannot beg, borrow, or steal it, I am resolved, I must marry it!"

I think Dickens is sheer genius in his writing. And, he knows the human heart in terms of the power of money over some people. Money is such a theme in this book; we see it in the Lemmles, Riderhood, Veneerings, etc. And, even in Bella Wilfer, who does change her mind about the value of love over money as the story progresses.

I recommend listening to an audio version, but be sure to go for the unabridged. And, I highly recommend Dickens; for me, there's not many to compare.

### **Skillset**

This review is for the MP3 Audio version. I had been looking forward to listening to this after enjoying the MP3 of Little Dorrit, performed superbly by Anton Lesser. Unfortunately, this disc is a disgrace. Apart from the questionable decision of not choosing an English voice to read Dickens, the performance is so lazy and wooden that it sucks all the interest out of the novel. The reader has not even bothered to learn how common London place names are pronounced ('Southwark' in the first paragraph is not 'south-wark') and has countless weird pronunciations of common English words ('ruin' is rendered throughout as 'roon'). Given that Dickens is the most dramatic of novelists, including virtual stage directions in the text ('he sneered,' 'she sobbed,' 'he roared'), there is no excuse for delivering every line using a flat monotone in which even such distinctions as male, female, educated, working class, all sound the same. This recording does Dickens an unforgivable disservice and everyone connected with its production should be ashamed.

### **Snowseeker**

The first half of this book was a bit of a tough slog, and were it not for the fact that I had it on excellent authority that I was in for a treat, I would have been tempted to give up. The pace picked up considerably at the start of section 3, though. This book has a little bit of everything to please an array of tastes. There are unsavory, disreputable characters (which Dickens did so well), the ridiculous and self-important who are worthy of nothing but contempt, and kind and honorable characters. There is mystery, murder, greed, romance, jealousy, betrayal, and it is all topped off with a thoroughly satisfying ending.

I chose this particular edition over the myriad of others that are available because it included an introduction by Nick Hornby, whose books I love. Sadly, I could have done without Mr. Hornby's

introduction. After disparaging many contemporary writers (and there are many out there who may feel rightly so, but I don't feel the was the appropriate forum to voice this opinion), he then went on to state ". . . it is only fair to warn you that *Our Mutual Friend* - his last completed novel - is in the opinion of many, including this writer, far from his best." Perhaps the publishers should have looked a little harder to find someone who actually likes and respects the novel to write an introduction, rather than go with a popular writer who clearly does not.

Also included in this edition was a list of characters and some charming illustrations. I don't know if the list of characters is standard in all editions, but I found it invaluable as I read the first half of the book. Trying to keep track of something like two dozen principal characters while trying to follow the story would have been near impossible for me without this tool.

So let me sum up my rating: 5 stars for the work by Dickens, and 1 star for the introduction by Nick Hornby.

#### **Faebei**

This is one of my favorite Dickens novels. But this production of the novel is wretched. "Illustrated" but none of the illustrations have anything to do with the text. They were so distracting. I never listened to the accompanying audiobook. It was probably crap ad well.

#### **Sarin**

I would never have tackled this novel if my daughter hadn't given it to us for Christmas and kept asking if we had read it. So when we needed a good book to read aloud in the spring, my husband and I began *Our Mutual Friend*. What a treat! I am amazed by any novelist's ability to create an array of characters and circumstances and then weave them all together in surprising ways. Dickens not only does this with great skill; he is also a caustic satirist of great humor, an absolute genius of character study, and a spirited social critic to boot. When the wicked finally get their comeuppance, those who apply the verbal medicine do so with an articulate fervor that is deeply satisfying. Not always an easy read, this book is definitely worth the effort.

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