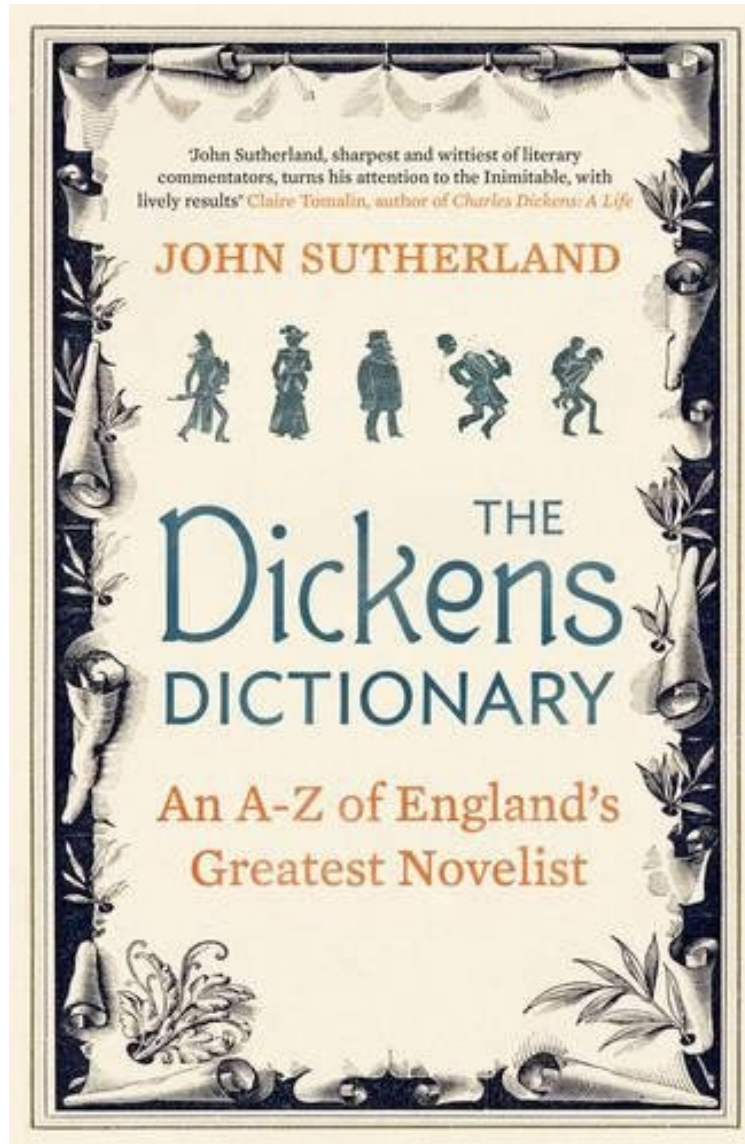


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## The Dickens Dictionary: An A-Z of England's Greatest Novelist

*John Sutherland*

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**John Sutherland : The Dickens Dictionary: An A-Z of England's Greatest Novelist** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Dickens Dictionary: An A-Z of England's Greatest Novelist:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Concise collection of colourful commentsBy Peter RowlandIf published in 1912, a book bearing this title would have run to at least 400 pages of small print. It would clearly have been an encyclopaedia and, in the absence of any other distractions, would presumably have been pounced upon with

great delight by the Dickens enthusiasts of that day with ample time at their disposal. But, in the age of Kindle, standards and desires have changed. This is a small, attractive, almost pocket-sized volume, suitable for devouring in bite-sized portions on a commuter train or, in more relaxed conditions, from the depths of an armchair for a satisfying couple of hours. Dr Sutherland, adroit and savvy as ever, has come up with the ideal package for the current bicentenary celebrations. He's delivered the goods. In a hundred short entries running from Amusement to Zoo Horrors, via (among other items) Bastards, Keynotes, Micawberomics, Onions, Ravens, Svengali and Trains, pleasantly embellished with contemporary illustrations, we are entertained and educated in equal measure. The style is lively. The sentences are short. So are the paragraphs. Attention is drawn to a host of items that may well have been missed in the routine perusal of a Dickens novel. Unexpected patterns are discovered. Challenging questions are abruptly posed, and -- after a moment or two's suspense or teasing -- snappy answers are usually provided. It is an engaging and invigorating encounter. There is the odd minor lapse. Queen Victoria, we are told, is never mentioned in Dickens's fiction, although she features prodigiously in the opening paragraphs of 'Sketches of Young Couples' (1840). The author also asserts that Dickens intensely disliked both horses and horse-riders, apparently unaware of the extent to which young Boz, in the late 1830s, would hire steeds from the local livery stable and, joined by John Forster, gallop off for lunch at the King's Head Inn at Chigwell, in south-west Essex -- fictionalised as the Maypole Inn in 'Barnaby Rudge' -- and back again in time for an afternoon shift at his writing-desk. And the book does not quite live up to its title, for there are no entries under J, L, Q, U, V or X. The reader must look elsewhere (difficult, in the absence of an index) for information about Jarndyce, Lechery, Quilp, Umbrellas or Veneering (X can be excused). But take heart! There are no fewer than seventeen entries under the letter C, which obviously stands for Compensation (as well as Compeyson's Hat). A quirky, elegant and enjoyable production. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting..By jaffareadstoo Since 2012 has been the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Dickens, I hoped that reading this book would prove to be a good aide mmoire, and I think that it certainly lived up to my expectations. On the whole, I enjoy reading Dickens but don't always know where his references come from, so to have a book of Dickens information on hand whilst I was reading Bleak House was particularly useful. I think if you are a Dickens purist then this book might be filled with information you already know well, but if like me you are an occasional Dickens reader, you may find this book to be a welcome addition to your Dickens book shelf. I think the author has conveyed the essential elements of Dickens and even though all the letters of the alphabet are not covered in the book, there is enough browsing information to be useful.

Charles Dickens created a riotous fictional world that still lives and breathes for thousands of readers today. But how much do we really know about the dazzling imagination that brought it into being? This alphabetical companion to Dickens' work excavates the hidden links between his characters, themes, and preoccupations.

'John Sutherland, sharpest and wittiest of literary commentators, turns his attention to the Inimitable, with lively results.' Claire Tomalin, author of *Charles Dickens: A Life*, on *A Dickens Dictionary* 'Sutherland, as always, wears his erudition lightly, and his love of the quirky and off-beat shines warmly through this enjoyable book, which often made me laugh aloud' Independent 'Sutherland, as always, wears his erudition lightly, and his love of the quirky and off-beat shines warmly through this enjoyable book, which often made me laugh aloud.' -- Susan Elkin, Independent on Sunday 'Step forward John Sutherland, whose crackling little book is a surprise antidote to Dickens ennui.' -- Londonist 'Sutherland is clearly a man who knows his subject so well that he's able to play games with it. The result is a joyful dance of a book that even the most jaded Dickens reader will relish.' -- Londonist 'An imaginative and witty dictionary.' -- Telegraph '[Sutherland] has written a witty and quirky Dickens Dictionary in handy bite-sized entries ... A delight.' -- Telegraph About the Author John Sutherland is the recently retired Lord Northcliffe Professor Emeritus at University College London: a title that one feels Dickens might have had some fun with. He has taught and published widely, particularly on Victorian fiction. His most recent relevant books are *The Longman Companion to Victorian Fiction* (Longman, 2009) and *Lives of the Novelists: A History of Fiction in 294 Lives* (Profile, 2011). He and Stephen Fender published *Love, Sex, Death and Words: Surprising Tales from a Year in Literature* with Icon Books in 2010.