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Opening extract from
**Charles Dickens:
Scenes from an
Extraordinary Life**

Written by
**Mick Manning
Brita Granstrom**

Published by
**Frances Lincoln
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For the inimitable Elizona Home Roberston
1938 - 2010

JANETTA OTTER-BARRY BOOKS

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Charles Dickens was born on 7th February,
1812. He became one of the greatest writers who
ever lived. Yet he never wrote down his own life
story. In fact he kept details of his childhood secret
for many years. Eventually he did talk, revealing
that many of his characters and exciting stories,
especially *David Copperfield*, were based on events
in his own life.

By respectfully borrowing from his own words:
conversations, letters, quotes and writings, as well
as his own children's fond recollections, Mick and
Brita have invited Mr Dickens to show you some
of the scenes from his extraordinary life.

Charles Dickens

SCENES FROM AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE



Mick Manning & Brita Granström

F
FRANCES LINCOLN
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Charles Dickens was born into an age of war and revolution. . .



when war against France still raged, the Prince Regent ruled and the future Queen Victoria hadn't even been born.



In the early 1800s Britain was in a state of change. . . The inventions of the Agricultural Revolution meant machines now did the work of many farm labourers. Thousands lost their jobs – and the homes that went with them.



Thousands of families crowded into towns, working in the mills, mines and factories of the Industrial Revolution. Child workers did many dangerous jobs while others were forced, by hunger and poverty, into crime. These were the people Charles Dickens would one day feel such sympathy for and write about.



John Dickens was a wages clerk for the Royal Navy. This job moved him and his family from place to place around the shipyards near London. Elizabeth Dickens had a talent for comic voices and taught her son to read at an early age.

BABY DICKENS – 1812

In which Charles Dickens is born in Portsmouth, England

I was born on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life these pages must show. . .



In 1817 John Dickens was posted to work as a pay clerk at Chatham Docks. Sometimes he would take Charles and his sister Fanny with him around the noisy shipyard, and even sail past the old prison hulks.



The Dickens family lived next to a small theatre in Sheerness for a while. Songs came thumping through the thin wall – and the whole family would often join in!



Dickens and his father sometimes walked past Gad's Hill Place. Many years later, in 1856, Dickens returned and bought that very same house.