

## **BLEAK HOUSE**

### **A description of many of the characters who appear in the play**

**Esther Summerson** - an orphan, becomes the housekeeper at Bleak House when she, Ada, and Richard are taken in by Mr. Jarndyce. Everyone loves Esther, who is selfless and nurturing.

**Mr John Jarndyce** - Esther's guardian and master of Bleak House. Mr. Jarndyce becomes the guardian of the orphans Ada and Richard and takes Esther in as a companion for Ada. Generous but uncomfortable with others' gratitude, Mr Jarndyce provides a warm, happy home for the three young people. Mr Jarndyce has sworn off any involvement whatsoever with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit.

**Ada Clare** - A ward of Jarndyce. Kind, sweet, and naïve, Ada becomes Esther's closest confidante and greatest source of happiness. She falls in love with Richard, but she never finds full happiness with him because of his obsession with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit.

**Richard Carstone** - A ward of Jarndyce. Affable but lazy, Richard can't decide on a career and seems to have no passion for a particular field. Eventually, he becomes obsessed with Jarndyce and Jarndyce. He pursues the suit for Ada's sake but never succeeds in providing a real home for her.

**Lady Dedlock** - married to Sir Leicester. Revered and wealthy, she has kept a secret of her illegitimate child throughout her life, believing the child died at birth. She reveals her true identity to Esther but is wary of pursuing a relationship because she believes Sir Leicester's reputation will suffer. When the truth threatens to come out, she runs away, certain that Sir Leicester will hate her.

**Sir Leicester Dedlock** - Sir Leicester is a strong, respected man who ultimately withers and weakens because of Lady Dedlock's disappearance. Fully willing to forgive her, Sir Leicester does his best to find her.

**Mr. Tulkinghorn** - A lawyer involved in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit. Mr Tulkinghorn shares Lady Dedlock's secret and threatens to reveal it.

**Inspector Bucket** - A detective hired by Tulkinghorn to investigate Lady Dedlock's past. Bucket eventually winds up investigating a murder and arrests the culprit.

**Mr Chadband** - A pompous preacher who takes any opportunity to orate.

**Miss Flite** - An insane elderly woman who lives above Krook's shop.

**Mr Gridley** - A man who gave up his life for the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit.

**Mr William Guppy** - A clerk at Kenge and Carboy. Mr. Guppy is smitten by Esther, despite the fact that she continually refuses his advances. He investigates her parentage with the hope of changing her mind.

**Captain Hawdon (Nemo)**- Krook's lodger. Hawdon is Lady Dedlock's former lover.

**Mademoiselle Hortense** - Lady Dedlock's jealous and scheming French maid.

**Mrs. Jellyby** - A blustery woman who is obsessed with her "mission," Borriboola-Gha in Africa. She neglects her family entirely.

**Jenny** - The wife of an abusive brickmaker

**Jo** - A street urchin and crossing sweeper who helps Lady Dedlock.

**Mr. Krook** - Owner of the rag-and-bottle shop. Mr. Krook collects documents even though he can't read.

**Mrs. Rouncewell** - The loyal housekeeper of Sir Leicester Dedlock.

**Harold Skimpole** - A friend of Mr. Jarndyce, who calls himself a "child" and claims to have no idea about time or money. Mr. Skimpole borrows money liberally with no thought of repaying it.

**Smallweed** – A moneylender. Smallweed threatens and wheedles other people to get his own way.

**Mr Snagsby** - A law-stationer. Mr Snagsby gets inadvertently caught up in everyone else's secrets. He sneaks around to avoid his wife's prying eyes.

**Mrs Snagsby** - Mr. Snagsby's suspicious wife, given to drawing inaccurate conclusions from her eavesdropping and spying.

**Mr Vholes** - A sneaky, immoral lawyer determined to get as much money as possible out of Richard's involvement with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit.

**Allan Woodcourt** - A doctor and friend of Mr. Jarndyce. Mr Woodcourt falls in love with Esther.