

# Can you read Dickens's shorthand?

Dickens's Gurney shorthand didn't use vowels much. So the word 'bad' was written as if it was spelt <bd>

What would the word 'bad' look like in shorthand?

- the symbol for < b > is here
- the symbol for < d > is here

So Dickens would have written 'bad' as: 1\

Pretty straightforward so far, but...

Reading it back is sometimes really hard because 1\ stands for <bd>.

But there is no vowel, so it does not necessarily stand for 'bad'. Instead, we could read it as 'bed', 'bid', 'bud' and so on.

## Let's have a go at reading

Each of these two lines spells out the title of one of Dickens's novels. Can you identify them?

1.

u l u n \ y i

Answer:

2.

L y n d /

Answer:

The ALPHABET.	
/	a.
1	b, be, but
c	c, k, see
\	d, did
✓	e, he
γ	f, if
f	g, God, good
L	h, have
∪	i, j, Jesus, high
∩	l, Lord, lordship
∪	m, him, am
-	n, in
L	o, how
∩	p, people
q	q, question
r	r, are, her, here
/	f, z, is, his
o	s, ing, ong
	t, it
L	u, you
^	v, w, which
x	x, Christ
∩	y, we, why, ye
e	&, &c.

## Joined up symbols

Dickens often didn't put spaces between symbols. Reading gets even harder when symbols are joined together. The problem with joined up symbols is that you don't know where the symbols start or end.

3.

- How many symbols for letters are there in this character (right)?
- What word does the character represent?



To find out the answers and much more, tune in to our 'Decoding Dickens' symposium.