

or sunk into the depths of despair. Readers had to wait for the next installment to find out what would happen. And wait they did. His fame spread, and he was enormously popular in England and the United States.

In 1842 Dickens traveled to the United States on a lecture tour. Although he left full of enthusiasm for the new country, he was disillusioned by the manners and customs he found there, feelings that are evident in his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens later tempered his judgment when he visited the United States again in 1867, this time giving spirited public readings of his work before enthusiastic audiences.

Late in 1843, while working on the serialization of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*, the first of his famous Christmas stories. He worked quickly, completing it in six weeks. The story was an immediate success with critics and readers, and it is still an enormously popular story. In it Dickens presents the essence of his belief that being poor is not shameful, that in fact there is virtue in poverty, just as there is virtue in generosity and in the love of our fellow human beings. Dickens went on to write a Christmas story every year for the next four years—*The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life*, and *The Haunted Man*.

Traveling, writing, and giving readings took their toll on Dickens, and in his fifties he began to grow ill. Eventually, he retired to his country home, where he began work on what would be his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, a detective story. Before he could finish it or even begin to unravel the mystery that surrounded the title character's disappearance, Charles Dickens died. He is buried in Westminster Abbey, London.