

Portsmouth to have Dickens statue

A statue in memory of Charles Dickens could be put up in the south-coast city of Portsmouth although the writer asked that none should be built. The author was born in Portsmouth on 7th February 1812, and spent the first three years of his life there. His birthplace is now a museum.

The statue is planned as part of the celebrations for the bicentenary of the novelist's birth in April 2012. Dickens is famous all around the world for his novels, including *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times* and *David Copperfield*. The writer has two statues in his honour, in Philadelphia in the US and in Sydney, Australia.

Not everybody agrees that there should be any statues of Charles Dickens because in his will he wrote: "I conjure to my friends on no account to make me the subject of any monument, memorial or testimonial whatsoever." However, his great-great grandson Gerald said the Dickens' family supports the plans.

Portsmouth Council plan that the statue will be unveiled on the 200th anniversary of Dickens' birth. They have not yet decided on the exact location, though, or on the artist who will make the statue.

Exercise A

Read the text on the other side. You have 1 minute to answer this question:

Are there many statues of Charles Dickens?

This exercise shows you how you can understand the main idea in a text very quickly.

Exercise B

One:

- Find the word 'bicentenary' in the text (second paragraph).
- What does 'bi-' often mean at the beginning of a word? Think of 'bicycle', for example.
- What does 'cent' mean? Think of 'century'. Think how many cents there are in 1 US dollar.
- Look at the whole sentence again. What do you think 'bicentenary' may mean?

Two:

- Find the words 'monument, memorial or testimonial' in the text (third paragraph).
- You know what 'memorial' means – something in memory of someone.
- Do you think 'monument' and 'testimonial' have similar or different meanings to 'memorial'?
- So, do you understand the sentence without knowing the exact meaning of these two words?

This exercise shows how you can use the context to understand words, and how you don't always need to understand words 100%.

Exercise C

Are the following statements true or false, based on the information in the text? Work with a partner, and decide together why you think they are true or false?

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| 1. Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth. | True | False |
| 2. Charles Dickens was born in a museum. | True | False |
| 3. Charles Dickens lived most of his life in Portsmouth. | True | False |
| 4. Gerald Dickens thinks the statue is a good idea. | True | False |
| 5. Charles Dickens only wanted statues of himself in the USA and Australia | True | False |