

Dickens statue for Portsmouth?

In a ceremony on what would have been Charles Dickens' 199th birthday yesterday, it was announced that a statue will be built in Portsmouth in time for next year's major celebrations marking Dickens' bicentenary. The announcement was made outside Charles Dickens's Birthplace Museum, after the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor Paula Riches, and children from Charles Dickens Infant School, in Buckland, hung a laurel wreath on the door. The statue will be paid for by the Dickens Fellowship and Portsmouth City Council.

Fellowship member Professor Tony Pointon said he had already seen a huge increase in enthusiasm for Dickens ahead of next year's major anniversary. He added: 'Hopefully this statue and next year's events will give Portsmouth the same importance for fans of Dickens that Stratford has for Shakespeare's admirers. All over the world more people are reading his books and becoming interested in where he came from. A statue has even just gone up in Australia, and it's about time we had one here as well.'

The council's head of culture, Stephan Baily, said there would be a competition to see who will create the statue, explaining: 'We want it to be a proper monument, like the statues of John Betjeman in St Pancras station in London, and poet Philip Larkin in Hull; that is the sort of thing we want to see in Portsmouth. The fellowship will be looking for artists to submit examples of their work and then we will choose what the best one would be.' He conceded that a location for the monument had not yet been decided, with possible locations including immediately outside the central library, near Dickens's birthplace, or on the steps of the Council building.

Also attending the ceremony was the city's first poet laureate, 21-year-old Keli Anne B, who said she was delighted to be involved with the event. 'I'm a huge Dickens fan,' she said. 'I read all his books at school and it's amazing to be asked to come here to help promote poetry and reading.'

Next year's 200th birthday will be marked by exhibitions, conferences and events throughout the city, and beyond.

Exercise A

Choose words from the box to fill in column B in the table.

 Playwright Novelist Essayist Poet Writer Ghost writer
 Journalist Author Biographer

What the person writes....	We call this person a	An example is
Long stories, usually over 150 pages (can be much longer), usually divided into 'chapters'		
Dramas for the theatre, usually divided into 'acts'		
Newspaper reports		
Longer pieces for newspapers or magazines, often describing something in detail or arguing a position. Sometimes a collection of works appear in book form.		
Short stories, usually under 50 pages. Sometimes a collection of works appear in book form.		
Long or short works in verse. You may or may not find that some lines rhyme (finish with the same sound)		
Someone who writes books about the lives of other people		
Someone who helps somebody else to write a book, often a biographer. Sometimes, these people do nearly all of the writing for famous people.		

Exercise B

Read the text. You have 2 minutes to answer this question:

How far advanced are the plans in Portsmouth to celebrate their famous son, Charles Dickens?

Exercise C

One:

- Find the word 'bicentenary' in the text (first 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 text again. What do you think 'bicentenary' may mean?

Two:

- 'Laurel' is a type of tree. It is evergreen (the leaves do not drop in winter). For this reason, it is used to symbolise eternal life. It is also used sometimes to make a sort of crown, for Roman Emperors or sporting heroes.
- Find the words 'laurel wreath' (first paragraph) and 'poet laureate' (fourth paragraph).
- Knowing what you have just read about laurel, what do you think these terms might mean, approximately.
- Is that enough of an understanding to get the meaning in the text?

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

Exercise D

The answers to these questions are not directly found in the text. However, using the information there, and your knowledge of the world, you and your partner can probably make an accurate guess:

1. What sort of work do you think John Betjeman and Philip Larkin were involved in?
2. In comparing Portsmouth to Stratford (birthplace of William Shakespeare), what do you think the Portsmouth Town Council may be hoping for?