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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2006

Charles Dickens A Bore?

On Friday, the New York Times made such a childish assertion, I can't help bringing it up again. In a review of "Bleak House," the new PBS miniseries, [the Times said](#) "'Bleak House' is too good to be homework. Unfortunately, it is such a fixture on required reading lists that many people forget to read Dickens' for fun."

Who exactly does the NYT have in mind? Presumably there are some buffoons out there that don't like Dickens, but they're hardly likely to be reading the Friday arts section of the NYT. Of course, the book that pops up on most reading lists is "Great Expectations," not "Bleak House." But whether students are reading "Great Expectations" or "Bleak House" or "Oliver Twist" or "David Copperfield" or just about anything else by Dickens, their usual reaction is not boredom (it's hardly "The Scarlet Letter" or some other worthy novel short on dramatics but long on critical praise) but excitement over one of the great entertainments. Charles Dickens is one of the most beloved writers of all time; his serialized novels were the "24" of their day, with each chapter providing a delicious cliffhanger. To what possible audience does the NYT think it's talking in assuming that we all think Dickens is a bore? (USA Today made an almost identical claim.)

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 1:13 PM



2 COMMENTS:

[Ed Sikov](#) said...

"Unfortunately, it is such a fixture on required reading lists that many people forget to read Dickens' for fun."

The sentence is so idiotic one scarcely knows where to begin. Is it unfortunate that people "forget" - ?! - to read for pleasure or that it's on

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