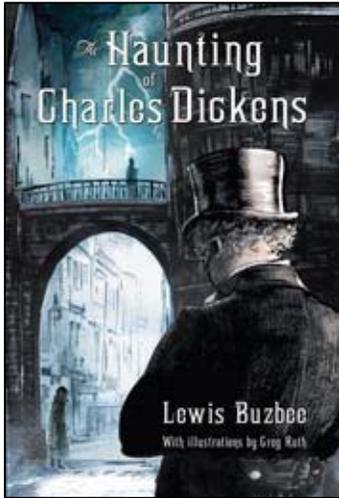


**Feiwei & Friends**  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

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**THE HAUNTING OF CHARLES DICKENS**

By Lewis Buzbee

**Reading Level**

Grades 4 to 8

**About the Novel**

Meg Pickel's older brother, Orion, has disappeared. One night, she steals out to look for him, and makes two surprising discoveries: She stumbles upon a séance that she suspects involves Orion, and she meets the author Charles Dickens, also unable to sleep, and roaming the London streets. He is a customer of Meg's father, who owns a print shop, and a family friend. Mr. Dickens fears that the children of London aren't safe, and is trying to solve the mystery of so many disappearances. If he can, then perhaps he'll be able to write once again.

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**Discussion Questions**

1. In the first chapter, the author paints a vivid picture of London using the bells of St. Paul's. What are some emblematic landmarks of your hometown?
2. Charles Dickens says, "I prowl the City at night, until I trip upon a story." Have you ever seen something that compelled you to write a story? What kind of an event would inspire someone to write a story?
3. What is the difference between "a spirit without a body" and "a body without a spirit"?
4. What do you think Dick Whittington was like when he was alive?
5. Orion keeps a diary in shorthand, which looks like a secret code. Have you ever created a secret code? What would your secret code look like?
6. Meg describes Ebenezer Scrooge as "the character all loved, for they all loved to hate him." What other fictional characters would this description apply to?
7. Meg lied to her father and her Aunt Julia so that they wouldn't worry about her safety. Have you ever lied to you parents? Why did you do it?
8. When Charles Dickens starts reading from *A Christmas Carol*, Meg "was entranced – she had entered another world." She thinks "the voices she heard did not emanate from Mr. Dickens, but from the very characters themselves who stood, more solid than spirit, in front of her." How do you feel when you're engrossed in a story? Do you feel the same way as Meg does?

## THE HAUNTING OF CHARLES DICKENS

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9. How did Charles Dickens save Meg and Orion from Bill Sikes?
  10. Why did Mr. Bogle force and beat children into doing backbreaking work?
  11. Why was the real Charles Dickens so concerned with child labor? What did he do bring attention to this issue?
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### Victorian Era Vocabulary List

Rochambeau (8)

Haberdasher (30)

Foolscap (34)

Hood-winked (38)

Derring-do (38)

Daguerreotype (47)

Farthing (72)

Snoot (72)

Palaver (103)

Broadside (121)

Truncheon (144)

Hooligan (144)

Hie (203)

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### About the Author

Lewis Buzbee is the author of *Steinbeck's Ghost*, and is a former bookseller and sales rep (for Chronicle Books). He also wrote the acclaimed adult memoir, *The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop*, published by Graywolf Press in June 2006. A native Californian, he lives in San Francisco with his wife and daughter.

***The Haunting of Charles Dickens***

By Lewis Buzbee

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-38256-8 | ISBN-10: 0-312-38256-1

**Feiwel & Friends**

**An Imprint of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group**

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

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