

**SOUR GRAPES:**



***--Critical Reviews of Various Bodies of Work***

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**Week of June 12th, 2011**  
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Book Review of:  
***The Pickwick Papers***  
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***The Pickwick Papers***  
***(Originally Serialized 1836-1837)***  
***Written by Charles Dickens.***  
***Review by Paul Lambrecht.***

Grade: A+

Mr. Pickwick, an independently wealthy grand old gentleman, is on a mission of discovery. Along with his band of devoted followers, he wants to experience a taste of every class of people in Victorian society of the time.

He travels to the country and is wrapped up in people's various adventures and scandals. One of his companions almost fights a duel. Pickwick voluntarily spends three months in a debtor's prison. On more than one occasion, his good intentions lead him into compromising situations, usually where the ladies are concerned.

Women, or "lovely creeturs," as they're generally called in the book, are prone to fainting and sobbing and sinister machinations in general. The tone of the book is light-hearted satire, and towards the end is pretty heart-warming and life-affirming. Some of the witty prose and logical reversals arising from the book's episodic nature, are the funniest I've read in a long time.

All in all, I liked the book because it presents a world which is simpler and more honorable than the current age, and the society described is fascinating because it's also so much different than ours: Dickens's characters are much more sure of themselves, and resigned to their class and destiny, and it's a much more positive thing than it sounds. One gets the feeling a person used to know what to expect from his or her life, and that made one comforted and happy, rather than the anxious rudderless lives so many people in fiction nowadays tend to leave. In this novel, written when he was just 24, Dickens establishes the framework, and the depth of texture in the worlds he'll go on to create, and develop his themes of charity and concern for London's unfortunates, his belief in ghosts and personal transformation, and the beginnings of his critique of British society during the Industrial Age.