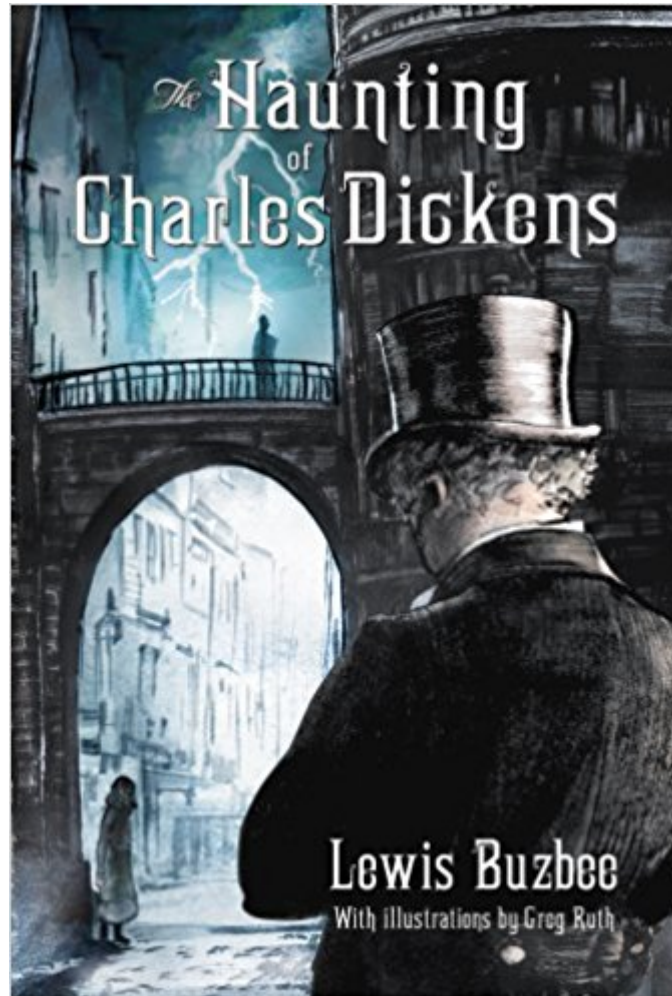




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# The Haunting Of Charles Dickens



## Synopsis

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 chance 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. With stunning black-and-white illustrations by Greg Ruth, *The Haunting of Charles Dickens* by Lewis Buzbee is a literary mystery that celebrates the power of books and brings to life one of the world's best-loved authors.

## Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (November 13, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312641230

ISBN-13: 978-0312641238

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #2,392,296 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in Books > Teens >

Historical Fiction > Biographical > European #781 in Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers >

Historical #1222 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Europe

## Customer Reviews

Gr 6-8 — Nineteenth-century London was a dangerous place for children; some were stolen from their families and forced to work in dreadful factories. Young Meg Pickel is not one of these unfortunates; she has a safe home and a loving family, but her teenage brother disappeared six months earlier, and their widowed father appears to have given up hope of finding him. The Pickels are not without resources; their dear friend is the world-famous novelist Charles Dickens, and he joins forces with Meg to solve the mystery of Orion's disappearance. Their search allows readers to tour the city, with its horse-drawn carriages, pubs, heavy fog, pickpockets, and press gangs. Many scenes and characters take inspiration from Dickens's novels. But having the author in the mix is a bit of a *deus ex machina*; his fame and fortune help the characters through many a tight spot. The

tale begins with a fake seance and a real ghost, but Buzbee never revisits or explains these supernatural elements. Instead, he gets the search moving quickly, and the fast pace may help some readers past the flowery, pseudo-Dickensian writing style. Ruth's delightful black-and-white drawings add atmosphere and interest. If historical mystery fans are not quite up for Philip Pullman's *Ruby in the Smoke* (Knopf, 1987) or Eleanor Updale's *Montmorency* (Scholastic, 2004), this book could be a good way to work up to them. --Geri Diorio, The Ridgefield Library, CT (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After young Orion disappears, his sister, Meg, finds herself unable to sleep. Restless with insomnia, she creeps out of her house one night, leaps across the roofs of London, and comes upon a seance, where she discovers not only an urchin she believes could be her brother, but also a sleepless and wandering Charles Dickens. Dickens, a customer in her father's print shop and a family friend, is seeking inspiration for his next book, and he finds it as he joins Meg's search for her missing sibling. Buzbee, author of the award-winning *Steinbeck's Ghost* (2008), has humanized another literary giant, revealing not only Dickens's humor and foibles but also the seedy, cruel underside of nineteenth-century London, including its exploitation of children. While exploring basic human rights issues, Buzbee also offers a rollicking good historical mystery, written in Dickens's style and illustrated with appealing line drawings, which include a subtle tip of the hat to a more contemporary London that a few readers may catch. Grades 5-8. --Frances Bradburn --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The Pickel family owns a print shop and has customers/friends with the likes of Charles Dickens. The daughter of the house, Meg, is adventurous and daring. She is strong willed and tries to find her missing older brother. While traveling at night through London she unexpectedly meets Charles Dickens. They make a pact that they will save Meg's brother. I felt different enjoyment from this book than Buzbee's *Steinbeck's Ghost*. Instead of flowing into each book Steinbeck wrote this one was a whole new mystery featuring Dickens and mentions of his stories. Meg and Dickens are interesting partners. Dickens comes across very fun loving which if you have seen real photos of Dickens you would not think that of him because I have not seen one where he smiles. This book tells about the dark side of the times for children who worked in labor houses like Dickens did once as a child. So book has a little grittiness to it that makes some it hard to enjoy even though it may be based on

facts. Dickens does make it laughable at times by dress in odd suits and meeting odd souls. Good read for Dickens lovers.

This is a great series for young adults that is written by a local, Bay Area author. A teacher of mine heard about this author while at a Steinbeck conference from another teacher. We bought the series for the campus library. We cannot keep it on the shelves. The students really enjoy it.

Three of us tried to read this book, and, well, only one of us made it through to the end. Now, that could say something about us, but I think it's more a reflection of a writer who was following a formula of other books and proved, in this case, that such things just shouldn't be done. Or, to put it differently, Lewis Buzbee was writing a type of book instead of being inspired from the inside out. My daughter, for instance, read a review of the book in preparation to writing her own, and had an ah-ha! moment when this other reviewer said that the writing "felt forced" (Becky). Interestingly, however, I have heard several middle-school students talk about this book, and they love it. So I'm discombobulated. I thought the Beatles references were just dumb, but they were intrigued by them. I thought there was nothing of Charles Dickens whatsoever in this book, but these students wanted to read Charles Dickens's books after reading this because they liked the character in the book. What we all agreed on is that the illustrations are excellent. So, to be candid, as I think back about the books I read growing up and what I would like were I in school today, I think this book would be well-liked by the maybe-then me. It's a book that I would recommend to others because I have the feeling that something good is in there somewhere, even though I don't have the kind of chops to appreciate it.

I greatly enjoyed being swept away into the London of the Dickens era. While the phony seance near the beginning of *The Haunting of Charles Dickens* may have hinted at ghosts and paranormal, it soon becomes apparent it is trickery and unscrupulous business practices that Meg and Mr. Dickens must overcome. Meg, who had gone out in search of her lost brother, Orion, was drawn to the strange green glow emanating from skylights of an empty mansion. There she comes across her old family friend, Charles Dickens, who is also looking in on the seance. Before their secretive viewing of the seance is over, Meg glimpses a young man she believes to be her brother who has been missing for six months. This lifts her heart and resolve to find her brother. In tracking Orion through old London, Meg comes across many signs he left behind. Her sleuthing and work in their family's printing shop leads her to seek more for herself when she's grown, rather than just marriage

into a suitable family. The setting of Dickens era London was vivid for me, including travel by foot and carriage complete with the clomp of horses' hooves on cobblestones. The jingle of the horses' harnesses, the squeaking of the buggies and carts, and the smell of a soot permeated city all add to the intensity of the scenes. The sights, smells and decay of old London remind the reader of that manufacturing era. The haunting in this story comes about three ways: The first apparent haunting is the loss parents experience for their "lost" children who've been forced into labor in those 'underground' sweatshops. The haunting that affects Charles Dickens reflects his state of mind and emotions rather than being about ghosts. Meg is haunted by the loss of her older brother, Orion, yet she refuses to believe he is dead. The only ghosts turn out to be the children who are conscripted and forced to work under horrid conditions. They are the "living" ghosts who've been whisked away. Through the way author Lewis Buzbee wove some of the Dickens story titles and characters into this plot and setting, he offers teases which may tempt young readers to explore reading more about the Dickens era. I recommend 'top hats doffed' for Buzbee for reopening this world of reading about the Dickens era for readers, young and old.

Received as described. great, and very happy. my family all need it , good product with high quality. I am very happy and excited about this product. It looks good, feels real, and cuts very well. I definitely think the product is of good quality for the low price. In other words, you get a good product for the price you are paying for. Definitely recommended!

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