

Compare and contrast the characters of Dora and Agnes

Both Dora and Agnes played significant roles in the life of David. They were both beautiful, but while Dora was astonishingly pretty and innocent like a fresh blossom, Agnes had a bright and serene beauty reminiscent of a church stained-glass window. She spied around her an air of serenity, purity, tranquillity. Dora arrested David's love by her sweet little laugh, her musical voice and her childish, innocent ways. Agnes, on the other hand, was like an elder sister a 'good angel', whose advice David sought in everything.

Dora was educated in Paris, and could sing French ballads, play on the guitar and dance exquisitely. Agnes on the other hand, was deprived of formal schooling because of her household responsibilities. Yet, she too could play the piano, and used to read in her spare time. She was homely and intelligent.

Dora was inexperienced in housekeeping, and could not learn cooking and keeping account in spite of her best efforts to do so after her marriage with David. Agnes, on the other hand was an efficient housekeeper. In the words of Miss Betsy, Agnes carried a wise head on young shoulder. She had a keen sense of duty and responsibility and was devoted to her father. Not only did she look after his personal well-being, but she also took a keen interest in the affairs of his firm and when she learnt about Uriah Heep's wicked eye on Mr. Wickfield's business she was always watchful lest any harm might be caused to her father or his business.

She was courageous and able to face adversity boldly. When she learnt of Miss Betsy's and her own father losses through Uriah Heep's machinations, she considered the ways and means of getting them out of this difficulty. Dora on the other hand, was easily annoyed. Here again the contrast is seen through Agnes' advice to David that he should meet Dora with the permission of her aunts, under their roof if possible. Though both were motherless girls of about the same age, while Dora was under the protection of her father and her companion Miss Murdstone, who later proved harmful to her.

While Dora was always ready to be advised by David, Agnes was David's trusted friend, counsellor, guide and guardian-his 'good angel' in his own words. She was never jealous of Dora, and advised David to seek solace in nature after his severe loss.

Thus, while Dora symbolised Dickens' idea of women in general, Agnes represented his ideal of perfect womanhood.