This thesis examines the role of mystery in the later Dickens. Primarily, it is concerned with defining the role of mystery in Dickensian narrative and reading these texts in the context of ideas of mystery, narrative and detection. The thesis deals with all of Dickens's novels from Bleak House to The Mystery of Edwin Drood, excluding Hard Times. Bleak House is Dickens's first coherent, planned novel of urban mystery. It also follows Dickens's journalistic works on the detective police force and a number of other urban mysteries of the 1840's. The Mystery of Edwin Drood is chosen because it is Dickens's most overtly mysterious text and marks an early point in the development of detective fiction. Hard Times is omitted because, while it contains an element of crime, its didactic plot is not mystery orientated. Also, Hard Times is not set in London.

A consistent reading will show that considerations of mystery and mystery plotting are an essential aspect of Dickensian narrative and the interpretation of Dickens's work. Dickens's interest in urban mystery will be emphasised, along with his fascination with other significant mysteries, including mysteries of the self, the mind and identity, and of providence. A general movement from mystery as represented through specific institutions to a diffusion of mystery will be noted, as well as the growing significance of psychological mystery. However, this study is cautious of a strictly linear or progressive view of artistic or generic development, preferring always productive complexities and the interplay of generic impulses to categorisation. This thesis will assist in the placement of Dickens and mystery in the development of Victorian mystery and the formation of detective fiction. It will formulate and put into practise definitions connected with narratology and mystery. Finally, it will affirm that mystery, traditionally undervalued or dismissed as being outside of serious critical concerns, should instead be treated as an essential aspect of reading and interpreting Dickens, thereby adding to our overall appreciation of the richness and complexity of his work.
Dickens was working on The Mystery of Edwin Drood when he passed away. How would he have ended the novel? During October of 1869, at Gad's Hill Place, Dickens begins work on The Mystery of Edwin Drood. On March 15, 1870 Dickens gives his final public reading. In April of 1870 publication of Drood begins. On June 8, 1870 Dickens spends the day working on The Mystery of Edwin Drood. During dinner he collapses. On June 9, 1870 Dickens dies at Gad's Hill Place. Public Readings.