



Oliver Twist (1837-39)





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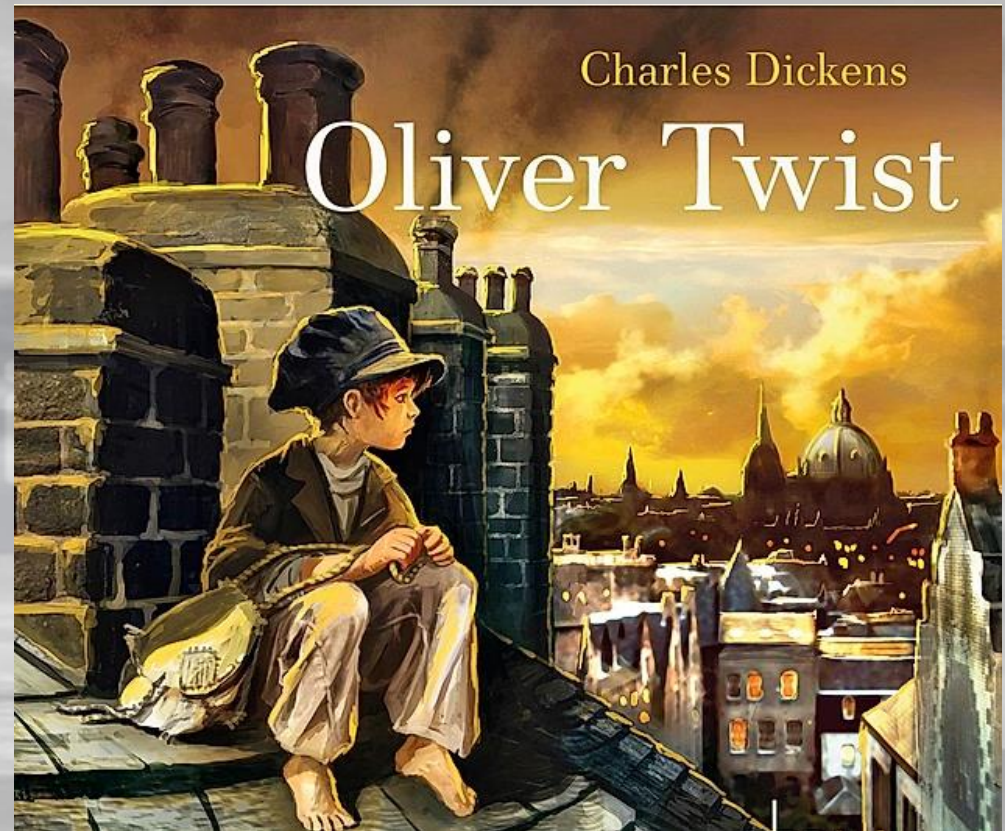
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Oliver Twist



- Orphan boy of nine years old.
- Pious, innocent, though treated with cruelty.
- His true identity is the central mystery of the novel.
- His name is actually a play on words: «all of a twist»





Fagin



- A criminal.
- Jew
- Trains homeless children to work as pickpockets for him.
- Buyer of other people's stolen goods.
- He rarely commits crimes himself.
- He is the stereotype of anti-semitism.





Nancy



- Young prostitute
- Former child pickpocket
- Bill Sikes's lover (who often abuses Oliver).
- Despite her criminal life she has a sense of moral decency.
- She is among the noblest characters in the novel.





Mr Brownlow



- Well-off , erudite gentleman.
- Oliver's first benefactor.
- He behaves with compassion and common sense throughout the novel.
- In short, he is the good guy.





Monks



- A sickly , vicious young man.
- Violent
- He schemes with Fagin to give Oliver a bad reputation..
- The villain of the story.





Mr Bumble



- Pompous self-important beadle of the workhouse Oliver was born.
- Unforgiving towards the paupers under his care.
- Through him, Dickens satirizes the greed and hypocrisy of the society of his time.





Plot





- Oliver Twist is born in a hospice.
- Orphan of a beggar who dies while she is giving birth.
- The little one is entrusted to Mrs. Mann's orphanage.
- Unfortunately, the children who are guests lead a life of hardship and deprivation.
- At the age of nine, Oliver is taken back to the workhouse where he was born.





- The workhouse is located roughly 70 miles outside London.
- Too many children and too little food.
- One night, after being served his portion of gruel, Oliver asks for a second helping.
- This is unacceptable, and Oliver is sent to work as an apprentice to an undertaker.





- The boy then finds work as an apprentice chimney sweeper.
- Eventually, after suffering repeated mistreatment, Oliver runs away and heads for London.
- He soon finds himself in the presence of the Artful Dodger, who tells him to stay at the house of an “old gentleman” (named Fagin) with a number of other boys.
- Oliver learns that these boys are trained pickpockets.





- On an outing, Oliver witnesses the boys take a handkerchief from Mr. Brownlow, an elderly man, which prompts Oliver to run away in fear and confusion.
- The elderly man mistakes Oliver's behaviour for guilt and has him arrested.
- However, after learning more about Oliver, Mr. Brownlow realizes his mistake and offers to take care of him at his home.



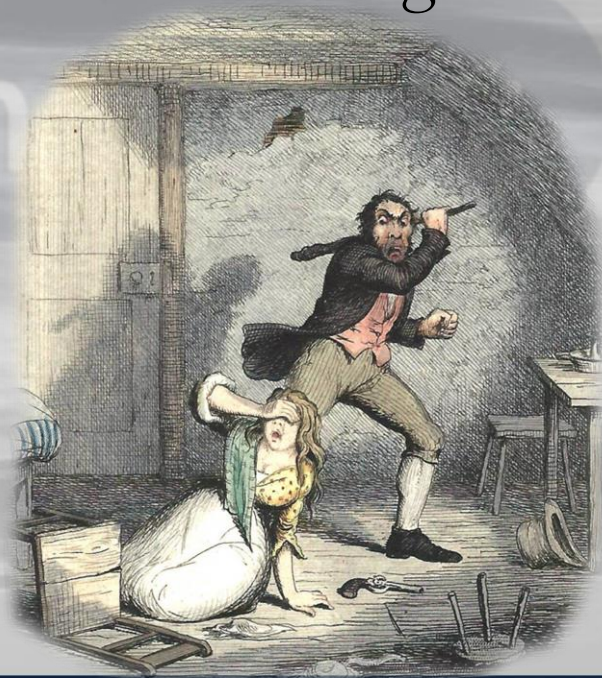


- Oliver assumes that he is now rid of Fagin and the pickpockets, but his knowledge of their crimes causes them to seek Oliver out.
- Nancy, a prostitute and mistress of one of Fagin's men, Bill Sikes, is sent to take Oliver from Mr. Brownlow back to Fagin.
- She does so successfully, and Oliver is sent on a burglary mission with another member of the group to the countryside around London.
- On this errand, Oliver is shot in the arm and then is taken in by the family (the Maylies) that he attempted to rob.





- While he is there, Fagin and a man named Monks plot to get him back.
- Rose Maylie, while on a trip to London with her family, meets with Mr. Brownlow to talk with Nancy, who has slipped away from Sikes to explain the plans made by Monks and Fagin to get Oliver back.
- She describes Monks and tells them when he might most easily be apprehended.
- Unfortunately for Nancy, news of her betrayal reaches Sikes, and he beats her to death.





- Sikes accidentally hangs himself soon after.
- The Maylies reunite Oliver with Mr. Brownlow, who forces Monks to explain himself.
- The reader and Oliver are then informed that Monks is Oliver's half-brother and that Oliver is entitled to a large fortune.
- The latter had in mind to kill Oliver to get the inheritance entirely, but the plan is foiled in time.





- Monks receives his share of the money.
- He emigrates to America, but soon becomes involved in crime again .He dies in prison.
- Fagin is hung.
- The Maylies, Oliver, and Mr. Brownlow move to the countryside where they spend the rest of their days together.





Social Criticism

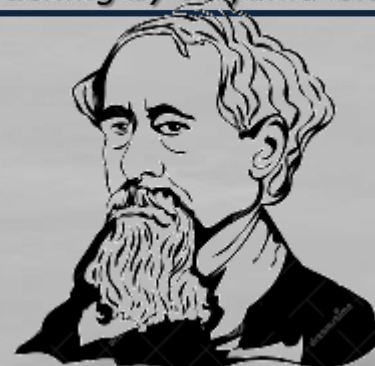


- Charles Dickens was well versed in the poverty of London, as he himself was a child worker after his father was sent to debtors' prison.
- His appreciation of the hardships endured by impoverished citizens stayed with him for the rest of his life and was evident in his journalistic writings and novels.
- Dickens began writing *Oliver Twist* after the adoption of the **Poor Law of 1834**, which halted government payments to the able-bodied poor unless they entered workhouses.
- Thus, *Oliver Twist* became a vehicle for social criticism aimed directly at the problem of poverty in 19th-century London.





HENCE



- Dickens attacked:
 1. the social evils of his times such as poor houses, unjust courts and the underworld.
 2. the world of the workhouses founded upon the idea that poverty was a consequence of laziness.
 3. the officials of the workhouses because they abused the rights of the poor as individuals and caused them further misery.



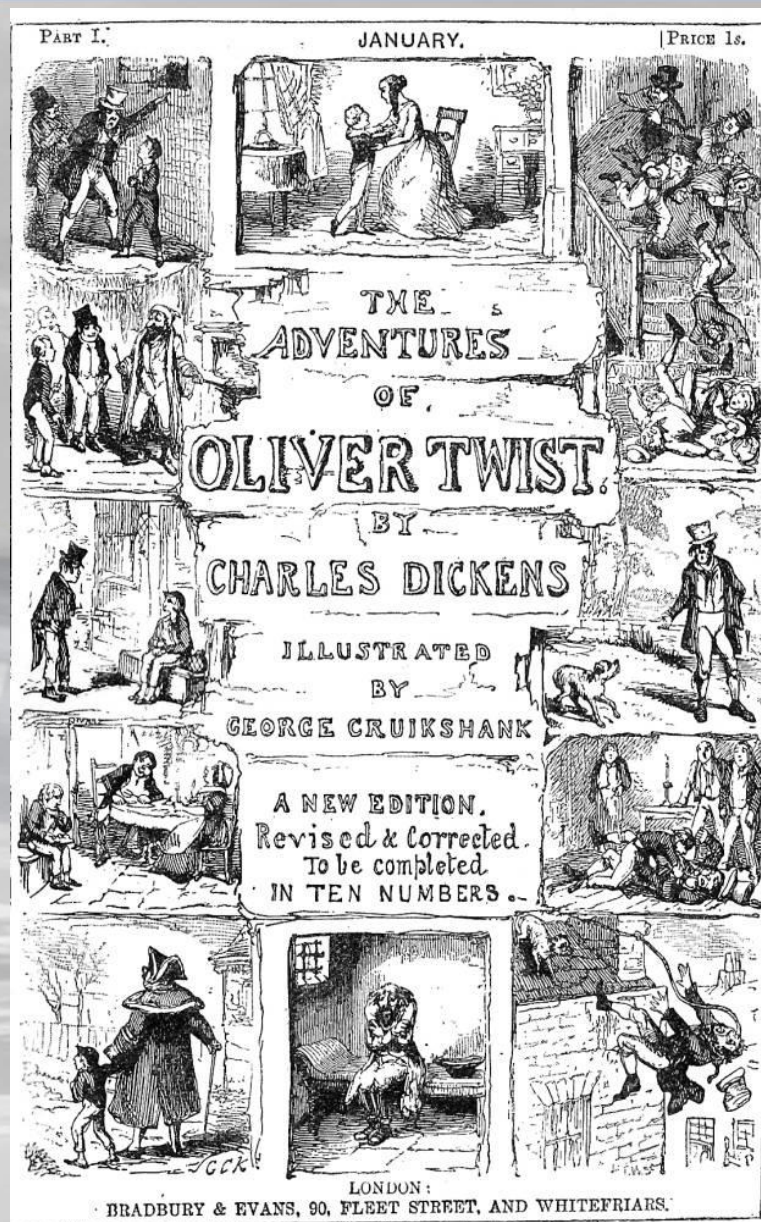




Success

- Oliver Twist was very successful because of its scandalous subject matter.
- It depicted crime and murder without holding back—causing it, in Victorian London, to be classed as a “Newgate novel” (named after Newgate Prison in London).
- While critics often condemned such novels as immoral, the public usually enjoyed them.
- The novel was also published serially, the anticipation of waiting for the next instalment contributed to its popularity.





<https://victorianweb.org/art/illustration/cruikshank/ot28.html>





Dickens's style



- **Realism**: he is a keen observer, full of details.
- **Sentimentalism** : he shows sympathy towards his characters and this gave an emotional quality to his writings.
- **Morality**: he reflects the moral attitudes of the British people. Crime must always be punished and virtue must always be rewarded.
- **Reporter's style**: actions, vivid descriptions, violent actions, dramatic situations, picaresque details, simple similes and metaphors.
- **Dramatist**: he explores his characters through their actions and their speech. His analysis is much more external than internal.





A Bildungsroman

- A Bildungsroman is a novel that tells the story of one **person growing up** and **becoming an adult**. A Bildungsroman has distinct features:
- There is a sensitive main character who searches for answers to life's problems.
- The story may begin with an emotional loss or difficulty .
- The main character sets out to explore the world and leaves his/her childhood world .
- The goal of this character is to be a mature, knowledgeable adult.
- There is often conflict with the world .
- The main character often helps others at the end of the novel because of all he/she has learnt .





Dickens's life

- Born in Portsmouth in 1812 from a middle class family.
- At the age of ten they moved to London.
- Received some education in a private school.
- His father was imprisoned for debts.
- He was sent to work 10 hours a day in a Warren's boot blaking factory.
- He earned 6 shilling per week, which he used to help his family, which was incarcerated.
- He began to work as a law clerk.





- He preferred to become a journalist reporting parliamentary debates.
- His experience as journalist influenced his first work: Sketches by Boz.
- Became popular with «The Pickwick Papers» in 1836.
- Started publishing a series of hits, first in monthly instalments, before being made into books.
- Traveled around Europe and even gave lectures in American Universities.
- Died in 1870 because of a stroke.

