'Oliver Twist': Knowledge Organiser

Plot breakdown

Oliver is born in the workhouse. When he is a bit older he is nominated to ask for more food because the boys are starving.

He is kicked out of the workhouse and given away to the Sowerberry family to be an undertaker's apprentice. He's bullied by Noah, they fight and he is locked up.

Oliver runs away to London, meets Dodger and is introduced to Fagin's gang.

Oliver is taken out with the gang and is horrified to see Dodger steal a gentleman's handkerchief. Oliver is wrongly arrested for the theft.

The gentleman, Mr. Brownlow, takes pity on Oliver and takes him in. The gang plot to get him back in case he reveals information about them.

Oliver is abducted by the gang whilst running an errand for Mr. Brownlow.

Oliver is used by Sikes in a burglary. They fail and Sikes runs away. Oliver is left behind but the people who live there feel sorry for him and look after him. They are called Fred and Rose Maylie.

When Bill and Fagin realise what has happened, they plot to catch Oliver again. Nancy overhears and visits Mr. Brownlow to warn him.

Fagin tells Bill about Nancy's betrayal and Bill murders her. Fagin is discovered and sent to prison and Bill dies trying to run away.

Oliver discovers who his parents were and joins Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies to live happily ever after.

Key words

morality – a code of right and wrong. People who try to be good can be called **moral** and people who do bad things can be called **immoral.**

vulnerable – in a situation in which you could be easily harmed. People living on the streets are **vulnerable.**

brutal – very violent or cruel.

corrupt – a word used to describe a person who uses their power in a dishonest or illegal way in order to make life better for themselves.

villain – a 'baddie' who harms other people or breaks the law to get what they want.

malicious – meant to hurt or upset someone.

victim – someone who has been harmed, often by other people.

naïve – If someone is naïve if they don't have experience of how complicated life can be and therefore trust people too much.

society – the people who live in a certain area. This could be a country, town or small group.

workhouse – a place where people who couldn't support themselves were sent to live and work.

Background information

'Oliver Twist' was written in 1837-39.

It was written by Charles Dickens.

In was published chapter by chapter in a periodical (magazine).

Charles Dickens had to work in harsh conditions as a child when his father was sent to prison.

Dickens wanted to criticise a new change to The Poor Law which happened in 1834 and created more workhouses and show how hard life was for poor people.

Characters

Oliver
He is a 'pale, thin' orphan who is treated badly by almost everyone he meets. He tries his best to be a good person and experiences 'horror and alarm' whenever he sees crimes being committed.

Mr. Bumble
The man who runs the workhouse and gives Oliver his name. He is 'a fat man' who enjoys power and doesn't care about the people beneath him.

Noah Claypole
A 'malicious and ill-conditioned' boy who bullies Oliver at the undertakers. He eventually runs away to London and joins the same gang as Oliver.

Fagin
An old man who runs the gang of pickpockets. He seems kind but his 'villainous-looking and repulsive face' reflects his selfish nature as he gets young boys to do his dirty work for him.

Jack Dawkins (The Artful Dodger)
A young boy who introduces Oliver to Fagin's gang who has 'all the airs and manners of a man'. He's confident and cunning.

Bill Sikes
A 'rough man' who has been a criminal for many years. He beats his dog viciously and brutally kills his girlfriend, Nancy.

Nancy
Bill's girlfriend who risks her life to help Oliver escape from the gang. She loves Bill even though he treats her abusively and she feels guilty about the life of crime she has led.

Mr. Brownlow
A wealthy older gentleman who takes Oliver in and looks after him. He believes in Oliver's goodness even when it looks like Oliver has stolen from him and eventually finds out the truth about Oliver's parents.