

## OLIVER TWIST KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

### SUMMARY OF THE TEXT (A)

<i>Summary</i>	
<b>1</b>	<p>a) Oliver Twist begins in a workhouse in 1830s England, in an unnamed village, where a young woman, revealed to be Oliver's mother, gives birth to her son and promptly dies.</p> <p>b) The boy, lucky to survive, is raised until the age of nine in a "farm" for young orphaned children, and then is sent to the local workhouse again, where he labors for a time, until his innocent request for more food so angers the house's board and beadle, Mr. Bumble, that the workhouse attempts to foist Oliver off as an apprentice to some worker in the villager.</p> <p>c) Oliver is eventually given over to a coffin-maker named Sowerberry. Oliver works as a "mute" mourner for Sowerberry, and must sleep at night among the coffins.</p> <p>d) After a fight with Noah, another of Sowerberry's apprentices, over Oliver's unwed mother (whom Noah insults), Oliver runs away to London, to make his fortune.</p> <p>e) Near London, Oliver meets a well-dressed young boy who introduces himself as the Artful Dodger, a thief under the employ of a local crime boss named Fagin.</p> <p>f) The Dodger takes Oliver to Fagin, who promises to help Oliver but really holds him hostage, and forces him to go on a thieving mission with the Dodger and Bates, another young criminal.</p> <p>g) Bates and Dodger try to steal the handkerchief of an old man, who notices Oliver (an innocent onlooker), and believes him to be the thief. Oliver is caught and hauled to jail, only to be released into the old man Brownlow's company after Brownlow sees that Oliver had nothing to do with the crime.</p> <p>h) Brownlow nurses Oliver for a time and vows to educate him properly. But after sending Oliver out to return some books and money to a bookseller, Brownlow is shocked to find that Oliver does not return—Oliver has been picked up by Nancy, an associate of Fagin's, and taken back to the criminal gang.</p> <p>i) The remainder of the novel comprises Brownlow's attempts to find Oliver, and Oliver's attempts to escape Fagin, his criminal associate Sikes, and the other boys.</p> <p>j) Fagin orders Oliver to accompany Sikes and another thief named Toby Crackit on a house-breaking, in a country village, that goes awry; Oliver is shot in the arm in the attempt, by a servant named Giles of the Maylie house (the house being broken into); Oliver nearly dies, but walks back to the house the next morning and is nursed back to health by Rose, Mrs. Maylie, and a local doctor named Lorsche. </p> <p>k) Lorsche later takes Oliver into London to find Brownlow, but they discover Brownlow has gone to visit the West Indies. Oliver is crestfallen, but is happy nonetheless with the Maylies, and is educated by an old man in the Maylies' village.</p> <p>l) Later, on a trip into London, Rose is visited by Nancy, who wishes to come clean about her involvement in Oliver's oppression, and Oliver finds that Brownlow is back in the city, having returned from the West Indies.</p> <p>m) Meanwhile, Mrs. Corney, mistress of the workhouse, receives a package from a dying woman named Old Sally, which Sally in turn received from Oliver's mother upon her death. The package contains material indicating Oliver's family history, which is of interest to a friend and shadowy associate of Fagin's named Monks.</p> <p>n) Nancy meets with Rose and Brownlow in secret in London, to discuss what she has overheard, from Fagin and Monks, regarding Oliver's parentage; Noah, sent to spy on Nancy, overhears this conversation, and reports it to Fagin.</p>

### KEY CONTEXT (B)

<b>2.</b>	<b>Poverty</b>	Populations of towns and cities were increasing rapidly. Large numbers of people were looking for work, so wages were low. Living conditions for the poor were appalling; one large house was turned into a number of flats which were filthy and over-crowded. There were numerous homeless children living on the streets of London without even clean water to drink.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Industrial Rev</b>	During the Victorian Era Britain became one of the world's biggest economic powers, it therefore became an industrial hub and the economy was strong. Despite this, the wealth was shared between a small percentage of the population. The trade industry increased, moving from manual labour to mechanised; increasing both poverty and crime rates.
<b>4.</b>	<b>The workhouse</b>	The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 allowed the poor to receive public assistance only if they went to the workhouse. They were deliberately made miserable to deter people from entering them; the poor would often beg on the streets or die to avoid going to them. Even children would have to work or be 'hired out' to do dangerous jobs for nothing.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Crime</b>	Crime levels rose exponentially at the end of the 18 <sup>th</sup> century and continued to rise as the population increased. Trials in court were often very quick, and neither prosecutor nor defendant were entitled to any form of legal aid. After the 1856 Prisons Act, prisons were made even tougher and involved hard labour. More serious crimes involved hanging or transportation to the colonies.

### KEY CRIME CHARACTERS (C)

<b>6.</b>	<b>Oliver Twist</b>	The novel's hero, whom throughout the text remains of high moral character despite his financial situation. Born an orphan in a workhouse and embroiled in crime to survive, he ends the novel happily having been adopted.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Fagin</b>	Antagonist Fagin is in charge of the 'boys', his thieves, and their crimes support his life in London after he manipulates them off the streets and exploits them for his own sinister lifestyle. He attempts to make Oliver a thief but fails and is later sentenced to death. He is a Jew and is described in extremely anti-Semitic terms by the narrator.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Monks</b>	The second of the novel's antagonists: Oliver's half-brother and hell-bent on keeping his fraudulent inheritance, and making Oliver a thief so that his name is sullied. Despite his station in life; chooses to surround himself with criminals.

	<p>o) Fagin tells Sikes, misleadingly, that Nancy has "peached" on the whole gang (even though Nancy refused to incriminate Fagin or Sikes to Brownlow), and Sikes, in a fit of rage, kills Nancy, then goes on the lam with his dog.</p> <p>p) Brownlow realizes that he recognized Oliver as resembling the picture of a woman in his parlor, and also recognized a man he comes to realize is Monks. Brownlow pieces together the mystery of Oliver's parentage: Oliver's father is also Monks' father, and Monks' mother defrauded Oliver's mother, an unwed woman named Agnes, of the inheritance Oliver's father, Edward, intended to leave to Oliver and Agnes.</p> <p>q) Monks wishes to destroy these facts of Oliver's parentage in order to keep all the inheritance for himself. But Brownlow confronts Monks with these facts, and Monks agrees, finally, to sign an affidavit admitting his part in the conspiracy to defraud Oliver.</p> <p>r) Meanwhile, the members of Fagin's gang are all caught: Noah; Charlotte, his partner; the Dodger; and Fagin himself.</p> <p>s) Sikes dies, by accident, attempting to escape a mob that has come to kill him following Nancy's death.</p> <p>t) Brownlow manages to secure half of Oliver's inheritance for Oliver, and gives the other half to Monks, who spends it in the New World on criminal activity.</p> <p>u) Rose Maylie, long in love with her cousin Harry, eventually marries him, after Harry purposefully lowers his social station to correspond with Rose's; Rose was said to be of a blighted family, and in the novel's final surprise, this "blight" is revealed: Rose's sister was Agnes, meaning that Rose is Oliver's aunt.</p> <p>v) At the novel's end, Oliver is restored to his rightful lineage and is adopted by Brownlow. The pair live in the country with Harry, who has become a parson, and Rose, along with Losborne and Mrs. Maylie. Oliver can, at last, be educated in the tranquility and manner he deserves, as the son of a gentleman.</p>
--	---

### SYMBOLS/MOTIFS (E)

	<i>Symbols</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
25.	<b>Coffins</b>	Coffins appear repeatedly in the novel and symbolise the proximity of death throughout for Oliver Twist and the very real possibility that Oliver won't live long enough to realise his high birth and acquire his inheritance. Oliver manages to escape the coffin; but many of the other characters do not, especially those embroiled in crime.
26.	<b>Bulls-eye</b>	Sikes' dog as 'faults of temper in common with his owner' and is a symbolic emblem of his owner's character: the dog's viciousness reflects Sikes' own brutality. After Sikes murders Nancy, Bull's eye comes to represent his guilt; the dog leaves bloody footprints on the floor of the room where the murder happened.
27.	<b>Disguised/ Mistaken identities</b>	The plot of the text revolves around various false identities that other characters impose on Oliver. Mr Bumble and the other workhouse officials insist on portraying Oliver as an ungrateful immoral pauper. Monks does his best to conceal Oliver's identity in order to keep the inheritance for himself. Characters also disguise their own identities when it serves them; Nancy pretends to be Oliver's middle-class sister to return him to Fagin.
28.	<b>Physiognomy</b>	Dickens is known for reflecting the personality of his characters in their physical appearance; Oliver is one of the most honourable characters in the novel and he is singled out multiple times for special attention. The power of physiognomy, combined with the fact that Fagin is hideous, and Rose is beautiful, suggests that external appearance reflects inner character in Dickensian texts.

9.	<b>Bill Sikes</b>	The third and final antagonist of the novel; a brutal 'housebreaker' or robber who takes Oliver with him on the failed robbery of the Maylie's house. Kills Nancy in a fit of rage and he symbolises the outcome of a brutalising existence.
10.	<b>Nancy</b>	Sikes' romantic partner. She is tasked with returning Oliver to the gang, she later regrets her part in this and protects the boy. Nancy is wrongly killed by Sikes in rage because he believes she 'peached' on the gang. She represents Dickens' first ideas about a fallen woman, though her death is presented highly sympathetically.
11.	<b>Charley Bates</b>	A young thief of Fagin's who undergoes a moral transformation from ironic young thief to defender of goodness after he realises that Sikes has killed Nancy.
12.	<b>Mr Bumble</b>	A more minor antagonist in the novel: the parish beadle who takes a dislike to Oliver and eventually marries Mrs Bumble to take control of the poorhouse to order paupers around. He is exposed as being complicit in part of Monk's plot and loses his social standing.

### KEY QUOTATIONS RELATED TO CRIME (D)

13.	<b>Noah Claypole</b>	<i>'And it's a great deal better, Work'us, that she died when she did, or else she'd have been hard-labouring in Bridewell, or transported, or hung; which is more likely than either isn't it?'</i> <b>Emphasises links made in Victorian society between poverty and crime. Oliver rise to the bait in attacking him and only further proves Noah's idea that the poor are criminals at heart.</b>
14.	<b>Narrator (about Monks)</b>	<i>'He had left her, when only eighteen; robbed her of jewels and money; gambled, squandered, forged, and fled to London; where for two years he had associated with the lowest outcasts'</i> <b>As a foil to Oliver's purity Monks and his degradation proves that criminality spans wealth and social class. Life offered Monks advantages that no one in Fagin's gang could have imagined, and still he chooses to spend much of his life in the company of criminals.</b>
15.	<b>Narrator (about Charley)</b>	<i>'Master Charles Bates, appalled by Sikes' crime, fell into a train of reflection on whether an honest life was not, after all, the best'</i> <b>In choosing to change is ways Charley Bates proves that criminals can repent and find redemption; criminality is not innate. If the poor were born to a criminal identity, they would not be able to shake it.</b>
16.	<b>Gentleman</b>	That boy will be hung... I know that boy will be hung' <i>Chapter 2</i>
17.	<b>Narrator (about Dodger)</b>	He wore a man's coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the cuffs back... to get his hands out of the sleeves... He was, altogether, as roistering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six' <i>Chapter 8</i>

## KEY THEMES (F)

29.	<b>Poverty, institutions and class</b>	Oliver Twist is a sustained attack on the British Poor Laws, one of the ways the novel does this is simply to depict the harsh realities of what life was like for the poor in England during that period. Dickens' description of the workhouses and of characters like Mr and Mrs Bumble also serves to show that Poor Laws are not only dehumanising, but they are part of the cycle of poverty rather than the remedy for it. The novel's goal then is not just to describe English poverty – it is actively to change perceptions of poverty and the general Victorian society that poverty is being dealt with humanely and appropriately in the hopes of changing society. Dickens' argument about poverty, social institutions and class is a complex imagining of the interrelation between all three: the workhouses play to the worse desires of people in power (like Bumble and Sowerberry) to keep the poor poor. The workhouses then enable the middle classes to argue for a self-fulfilling prophecy.
30.	<b>Social forces, fate and free will</b>	Oliver is an orphan <b>and</b> a pauper, meaning his fate is essentially sealed from birth; social forces seem poised to keep him in a low position forever. However, as the illegitimate son of a gentleman, Oliver has a competing fate: that of a son who realises his fortune later in life. The grand question of the novel then becomes which fate will determine the course of Oliver's life: the fate of the pauper, or the fate of the gentleman? Other characters also have their fate set up in interesting ways e.g. Monks, also the son of a gentleman, seems not to be able to realise his fate as a gentleman himself and he therefore becomes a criminal. Fagin and his crew – including Dodger – are mostly fated to remain criminals. Although Fagin does everything he can to avoid detection, it is not a surprise at the novel's end when he is captured and sentenced to death. Similarly, Dodger accepts it is his fate to be sent to a penal colony.
31.	<b>City and country</b>	The novel takes place in two separate, morally distinct locations: the Country and the City. To Dickens the country is a place of peace, quiet, hard work and strong family structures to ensure people continue to work hard and avoid criminality. The city however, is the antithesis, a place of difficult working conditions, where the poor are crowded together and ground down by the difficulties of industrial life, and a hotbed for criminality.
32.	<b>Thievery and Crime</b>	The text itself is a meditation on crime in 1830's England; an examination on who commits crimes, of the spectrum of crimes (from thievery to murder), and the idea of criminality as a learned behaviour or innate quality. Given Oliver's circumstances when he is born, according to Victorian ideas, he is naturally predisposed to criminality. One of the novel's greatest questions therefore is: will Oliver succumb to his 'natural' predisposition and learned behaviour, or will he retain his innate virtue? Dickens presents a full range of criminality as a means of describing English criminal society of the period. Fagin and Sikes are both 'natural' criminals i.e. criminality is a natural outgrowth of their innate badness or evil. Dickens, however, retains a certain amount of moral complication regarding other criminals in the novel e.g. Nancy. Dickens acknowledges that Nancy has been forced to commit crimes and therefore has a certain level of sympathy with her condition having been forced to work for Fagin for a young age. Dodger and Bates are funny and entertaining characters and there is a despair with which Dickens describes their condition as Fagin's servants, out of necessity. Oliver's purity and strength of spirit are never compromised throughout the novel; it is implied his 'gentlemanly' parentage makes it more likely he will avoid a life of crime. Thus Dickens seems to indicate that criminality is a mixture of moral disposition and circumstance.

18.	<b>Narrator</b>	'Oliver wondered what picking the old man's pocket in play, had to do with his chances of being a great man. But thinking that the Jew [Fagin], being so much his senior, must know best, he followed him quietly to the table; and was soon deeply involved in his new study.' <i>Chapter 9</i>
19.	<b>Toby Crackit (about Sikes)</b>	'We parted company and leaved the youngster in a ditch. Alive or dead.' <i>Chapter 25</i>
20.	<b>Monks</b>	'I tell you again, it was badly planned. Why not have kept him here among the rest, and made a sneaking, snivelling pickpocket of him at once?' <i>Chapter 26</i>
21.	<b>Dodger</b>	'You'll pay for this, my fine fellers. [...] Here, carry me off to prison! Take me away!' <i>Chapter 43</i>
22.	<b>Narrator (about Sikes)</b>	'It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down' <i>Chapter 47</i>
23.	<b>Narrator (about Sikes)</b>	'The noose was at his neck. It ran up with his weight tight as a bow string [...] and there he hung, with the open knife clenched in his stiffening hand' <i>Chapter 50</i>
24.	<b>Narrator (about Fagin)</b>	'The condemned criminal was seated on his bed, rocking himself from side to side, with a countenance more like that of a snared beast than the face of a man' <i>Chapter 52</i>



OLIVER TWIST

GELDART

## ELEMENTS OF CRIME (G)

	<b>Crime trope</b>	<b>How/where it appears in Oliver</b>
33.	<b>The nature of the crime</b>	<p>a) As we progress through the novel Oliver experiences the criminal world first hand; theft, abduction, murder, prostitution, deception, fraud.</p> <p>b) The heavy focus on crime in London underworld makes 'Oliver Twist' a clear example of crime writing – one rooted in <b>social realism</b>.</p> <p>c) Narrative itself is driven by a number of crimes: Bill Sikes' murder of Nancy, Fagin's corruption of young boys – in particular his attempts to pervert Oliver, Monk's vengeful spite as he tracks down Oliver to cause his ruin</p> <p>d) Arguably however, the most heinous crime of all is the crime of the state against its people:            Passing of the Poor Law Act in 1834            The creation of the workhouses            Authorities condoning child labour            Wide-held belief by those in power that poverty = criminality</p> <p>e) Therefore the novel conveys Dickens' opinion that values upheld by the state are more devious and destructive than the criminal world itself</p> <p>f) Many of these crimes have since been abolished and therefore it is difficult for modern readers to pin down what constitutes a crime</p> <p>g) The most violent and terrible crime in the text is the murder of Nancy by Bill Sikes who accuses her of betrayal; the scene is charged with emotional intensity as he beats her to death whilst she tries to pray for her life.</p>
34.	<b>Depiction of criminals</b>	<p>a) Fagin's gang are guilty of not only theft and deception; but after his initial escape from Fagin's den he is forcibly kidnapped from Mr Brownlow's and returned to the den.  <i>While modern readers would be appalled at the prospect of abducting children, Fagin and his gang believe it is their right and the authorities appear to turn a blind eye to it.</i></p> <p>b) Dickens' criminals are mainly detestable; he paints them as being deformed and wretched and their lives squalid and miserable.            I. Dickens establishes a link between their physical repulsiveness and their immorality e.g. Fagin is reptilian and 'villainous looking'.</p> <p>c) Fagin is depicted as the chief criminals, a manipulative and intellectual kind of villain – he feeds off others and brutally trains the children to pick-pocket.</p> <p>d) Sikes is a more terrifying, brutal villain; he is a violent, brutal robber and murderer. His murder of Nancy is vicious – an act of vengeance and anger.</p> <p>e) The Artful Dodger is a cunning worldly-wise thief. Despite being drawn with some affection he is self-seeking and full of guile.</p>
35.	<b>Victims</b>	<p>a) Oliver is the novel's insipid victim and literary hero.  <i>He is first a victim of the system and social and societal constructs: born into the workhouse where he remains and is mistreated until the age of nine. He then becomes a victim of Fagin's villainy, Sikes' cruelty and Monk's vindictiveness. However, Oliver also breaks laws: he assists Sikes, albeit unwittingly, in the house robbery as he can climb through the window. He even breaks the law by being on the road by himself (the 1824 vagrancy act criminalised sleeping outdoors and begging) Much like Sikes and Fagin – Oliver's outward appearance is reflective both of his morality and Dickens' views of him and therefore, Oliver is a handsome child.</i></p> <p>b) Nancy is a law-breaker in that she supports Fagin and Sikes in their acts of robbery. She is also a prostitute- although this is only alluded to.  <i>Her victimhood comes from the fact she has been immersed in Fagin's crime world since the age of five and the fact she is ultimately beaten to death by her lover and pimp. Her status is a victim is cemented in her sacrificing herself to keep Oliver away from a world she cannot leave</i></p>
36.	<b>Settings</b>	<p>a) Very clear time and place settings are evident in the text; the streets of 1830s London are specifically named, there is the workhouse, Fagin's den, the three cripples and Newgate prison.</p> <p>b) These dark and dangerous settings are contrasted with that of the Maylies and Brownlows which are middle-class settings.</p>
37.	<b>Police/law enforcement</b>	<p>a) There is a police force (of sorts) but Dickens does not place the police force in the forefront.</p> <p>b) The work of detection and arresting criminals is carried about by individual citizens like Mr Brownlow who tracks down Monks and interrogates him</p> <p>c) When it is thought Oliver has stolen Brownlow's handkerchief, the crowd shout "Stop thief" and they hound him with "a passion for hunting".</p> <p>d) Later a dehumanised mob pursues Sikes, in a state of frenzy and fury.</p>

<b>38.</b>	<b><i>Criminal trials and punishment</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Punishment is dolled out to criminals to serve Dickens' moral purpose</li><li>b) The apparatus of the law includes courts of law, magistrates and court officials, prisons and executions.</li><li>c) Formal trials are an important framework of the novel – despite Mr Brownlow's adamant pleas that he does not want to press charges Oliver still comes in front of the magistrate Mr Fangs for the theft of the handkerchief. He is sentenced to three months hard labour which is only retracted when a late witness arrives to testify Oliver wasn't the thief.</li><li>d) Dodger's trial is farcical; he is trialled for stealing a snuffbox and his punishment is transportation to Australia</li><li>e) Fagin's trial is a contrast however in that it is utterly serious. The scene is recounted through Fagin's eyes and suspense is created when the jury return their verdict – 'Perfect silence ensured – not a rustle – not a breath – Guilty'</li><li>f) To Sikes' Dickens administers a different justice; after he kills Nancy he is fearful of the consequences, terrified by shadows and plagued by his own conscience.</li><li>g) Sikes is transfigured by the act of murder and is accidentally hanged after being persued by a crowd unto a roof.</li><li>h) Fagin is condemned to the gallows as he faces the harshest form of institutional punishment; imprisonment in Newgate and hanging. He screams in terror as the crowds gather but he does not repent.</li></ul>
------------	--	---