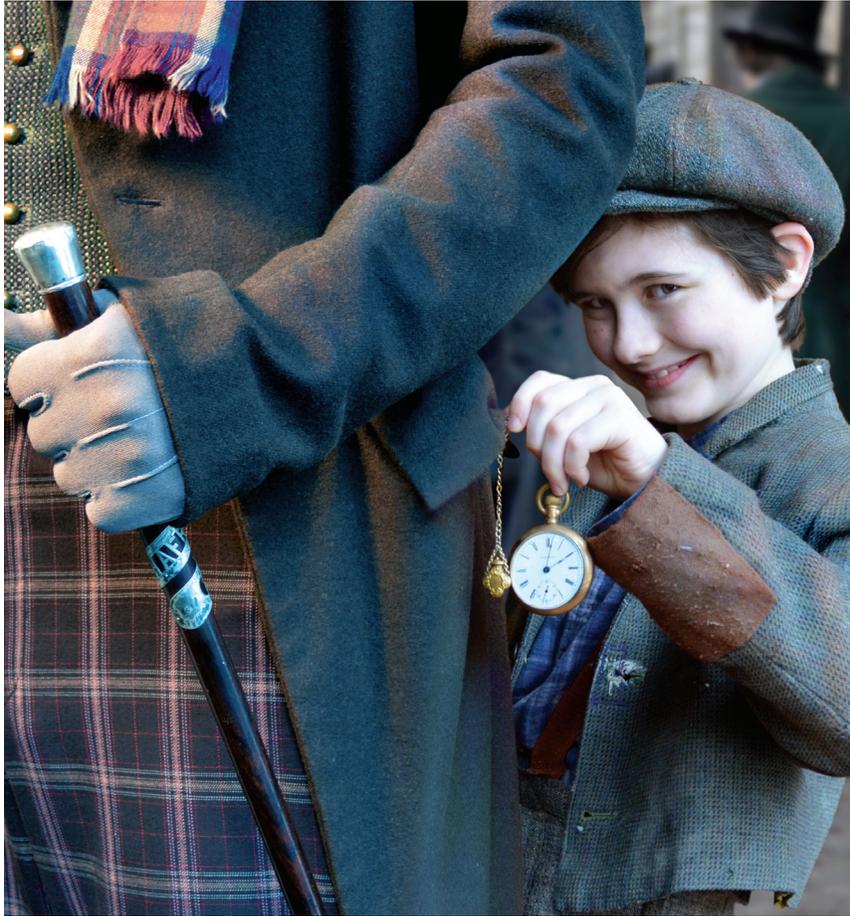


# A Study Guide for..



## Oliver!

BOOK, MUSIC & LYRICS BY  
LIONEL BART

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# THEATER AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE AND DISCUSSION

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PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND GO OVER WITH YOUR CLASSES BEFORE THE SHOW

## TEACHERS:

**Speaking to your students about theater etiquette is ESSENTIAL.** Students should be aware that this is a live performance and that they should not talk during the show. **If you do nothing else to prepare your students to see the play, please take some time to talk to them about theater etiquette** in an effort to help the students better appreciate their experience. It will enhance their enjoyment of the show and allow other audience members to enjoy the experience. The questions below can help guide the discussions. Thank you for your help and enjoy the show!

## ETIQUETTE:

What is the **role of the audience in a live performance**? How is it different from seeing a film? Why can't you chew gum or eat popcorn at a live theater performance? Why can't you talk? What can happen in live theater that cannot happen in cinema?

**Reiterate that students may not chew gum, eat, or talk during the performance. Please make sure all cell phones and pagers are turned off. Recording devices and cameras are strictly prohibited. If there is a disturbance, they will be asked to leave and the class will not be invited back to the theater. Students may not leave the building during intermission.**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW AT TRINITY REP:

What are the **differences between live theater and cinema**? (Two dimensional vs. three dimensional; larger than life on the screen vs. life-size; recorded vs. live, etc.) Discuss the nature of film as mass-produced, versus the one-time only nature of live performances. Talk about original art works versus posters. Which do they feel is more valuable? Why?

**Observation #1** – When you get into the theater, look around. What do you see? Observe the lighting instruments around the room and on the ceiling. Look at the set. Does it look realistic or abstract? Try to guess how the set will be used during the show.

**Observation #2** -- Discuss the elements that go into producing a live performance: The lights, set, props, costumes, and stage direction. All the people involved in the “behind the scenes” elements of the theater are working backstage as the play unfolds before the students’ eyes. Tell them to be aware of this as they watch the show. Observe the lighting cues. How do special effects work? How do the actors change costumes so fast?

**Actors in a live performance are very attuned to the audience and are interested in the students’ reactions to the play.** Ask the students to write letters to the actors about the characters they played and to ask questions of the actors. **Send these letters to:** Trinity Repertory Company, c/o Education, 201 Washington St., Providence, RI 02903 **or email to:** education@trinityrep.com.

# USING THIS STUDY GUIDE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

A Letter from School Partnerships Manager Matt Tibbs

Welcome to Trinity Rep and the 47<sup>th</sup> season of Project Discovery! The education staff at Trinity Rep had a lot of fun preparing this study guide, and hope that the activities included will help you incorporate the play into your academic study. It is also structured to help you to introduce performance into your classroom through the following elements:

- **Community Building in Your Classroom**
- **Inspiration and Background on the Artist**
- **Entering and Comprehending Text**
- **Creating Text for Performance**
- **Performing in Your Class**
- **Reflecting on Your Performance**

Further, the Rhode Island Department of Education has recently developed Grade Span Expectations for the fine arts in content, knowledge and skills that will be used to assess all students. (Available at <http://www.ride.ri.gov/instruction/gle.aspx>) Trinity Rep's Project Discovery student matinees help high school students in the following GSE areas:

- Analyzing and evaluating a theatrical performance for its effective use of music, dance, or visual arts (T1-3b)
- Evaluating major and minor themes and characters and their symbolic representation (i.e., cultural references) (T3-2a)
- Evaluating techniques for their effectiveness and craft (e.g., critiquing actor's performance and the playwright's dialog) (T3-2b)
- Evaluating a play or performances based on analysis of what is seen, heard, and known to judge its value and contribution to humanity (T4-1a)
- Evaluating character's objectives and motivations based on what is seen, heard, and known to explain character's behavior (T4-1b)
- Evaluating technical elements of theatrical production (T4-1c)
- Evaluating dramatic elements of a plot for their effectiveness and cohesiveness (T4-1d)



Enjoy the show!

# UNIT ONE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## A Conversation with the Directors: **Richard & Sharon Jenkins**

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by Myah Shein

*Richard and Sharon's shared history goes back to the 1970s when they were brought into the company by founding artistic director Adrian Hall. After leaving the company to pursue a career as an actor in films, Richard returned to serve as artistic director from 1990–1994. As an actor at Trinity Rep, Richard appeared in many productions and directed such productions as The Glass Menagerie, The Miser, Macbeth and Twelfth Night. With upwards of 100 film and television credits, Richard was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance in The Visitor (2008). Sharon's work with the company includes Camelot, Cabaret, West Side Story and many productions of A Christmas Carol.*



**Myah Shein:** What excites you about working on *Oliver!*?

**Sharon Jenkins:** Working together. That's what excited us most. Oddly enough, this is the first time that's happened.

**Richard Jenkins:** We've worked together, but never collaborated like this.

**Myah:** What is your *Oliver!* going to feel like?

**Sharon:** Gritty rather than glossy. It goes without saying.

**Richard:** I like to let it evolve. In movies you arrive on the set and everything has to be done. But in theater, if everyone is participating, it can evolve.

**Sharon:** It's about what the actors bring to the piece.

**Richard:** If you feel like we're interested in what you bring, you bring more. I want people to bring ideas; I want you to know more about your character than I do.

**Myah:** How do you approach the movement in a show like this?

**Sharon:** My feeling about musicals is that music and dance come because within the context of the scene, you get to a point where words can no longer suffice, and you go to the next level. So I hope the dance is connected to the scene, enhances the scene and makes the audience understand it,

pulling them into the moment. I would rather find a very human movement come out of a character and let that evolve rather than just, BAM... we're in a number. It should be organic.

**Myah:** How do you approach working together on a project like this?

**Richard:** We always collaborate, whether we're working together or not. There's a shorthand, rules for what we like and what we don't. I think it has to do with being together for 44 years, and being artists for 44 years. We started together, incredibly green.

**Myah:** What was it like working with Adrian Hall?

**Richard:** He nabbed Sharon very young, and I was right out of school. He loved the way she saw dance in the theater. I always loved him talking about theater and what it could do.

**Sharon:** He had the amazing ability to make you feel what you were doing could be the most important theatrical event of the year — that you were really breaking ground.

**Richard:** He made you feel this could be extraordinary. It was his passion.

**Sharon:** To be part of this in the early '70s, watching Adrian and [set designer] Eugene Lee create a theater that we never knew existed, was mind blowing.

**Richard:** And then many years later, to get the chance to direct with Eugene as the designer was truly amazing.

**Sharon:** After all the shows we've done with Eugene, we still learn from him.

**Myah:** What does it mean for you to return to Trinity Rep in this milestone 50<sup>th</sup> season?

**Richard:** We're excited that the community is so excited. I was terrified of it, I haven't directed in a long time. But I'll tell you, just to be here, back in the building... Yeah, we're ready. It's our home.

**Sharon:** It's our artistic home.



Oliver at the workhouse during the title song

# Biography of Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

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In his childhood, Charles Dickens (1812-1870) experienced first-hand the effects of poverty and suffering. His early education was interrupted at the age of twelve, when his father was sent to prison for debt. His entire family was imprisoned at Marshalsea in London, and the young Charles was sent to work in a boot-blackening factory, alone and miserable, living and working in atrocious conditions. However, after three years Dickens was able to return to school, and from there he went on to become a clerk in a law office. In 1828 he started working as a freelance journalist, a job which eventually developed into the illustrious career as a well-known journalist, novelist, and playwright.



A photograph of Dickens from 1868

Dickens achieved literary fame with novels such as *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. These works focused on timeless themes that spoke to the Victorian society as much as they do to modern readers: the importance of friendship and family, helping the poor or suffering, and being compassionate to strangers and loved ones alike. These ideas were explored through the social issues of his time, like poverty and child labor, using vivid and enchanting characters; Scrooge, Tiny Tim, Oliver, and the Artful Dodger are all still memorable cultural symbols today. With the success of his writing career, Dickens was able to travel broadly and establish himself as a philanthropist, embodying the compassion for suffering that is the main theme of his works.

In 1836, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, with whom he went on to have 10 children. He continued to travel the world and work as a writer, speaker, and philanthropist until June of 1870, when he suffered a stroke and passed away. His last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, remained unfinished with the identity of the murderer still unknown. Dickens was buried at Westminster Abbey alongside Geoffrey Chaucer, Ben Jonson, Edmund Spenser, and many other prestigious writers.

# Oliver's London

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In many of Dickens' novels, *Oliver Twist* among them, the city of London is as much of a character as any of the people in the story. When he wasn't busy writing, Charles Dickens would be walking. A terrible insomniac, Dickens would walk when he couldn't sleep, often logging 10 or 15 miles a night wandering the streets of London after dark. This led to a familiarity with the city that comes across powerfully in his novels. The detail given to the geography and culture of late-19<sup>th</sup>-century London in his works give Dickens' stories a rich and realistic world in which to unfold.

At the time that *Oliver Twist* was published in 1838, London had recently become the world's largest city, and would hold that title for close to 100 years. However, the burst of population and popularity had its pros and cons. Along with being a center for arts, commerce, and government, it was also full of poverty and disease. Health and hygiene regulations as we know them did not exist; people were drinking from the Thames, into which the city's sewage drained. The booming population, rich and poor, sick and healthy, were all thrown together on crowded streets and cramped buildings. Cholera was frighteningly common, and healthcare was not always readily available for the enormous portion of the population who couldn't afford to pay for a doctor. This struggling class were the people on whom Dickens chose to focus in his works.

Fagin, the ringleader of the young London pickpockets in *Oliver Twist*, lives on Saffron Hill in London. Dickens describes the neighborhood in detail:

“Near to the spot on which Snow Hill and Holborn Hill meet, there opens, upon the right hand as you come out of the City, a narrow and dismal alley leading to Saffron Hill. In its filthy shops are exposed for sale huge bunches of second-hand silk handkerchiefs, of all sizes and patterns; for here reside the traders who purchase them from pickpockets. Hundreds of these handkerchiefs hang dangling from pegs outside the windows or flaunting from the door-posts; and the shelves, within, are piled with them...Here, the clothesman, the shoe-vamper, and the rag-merchant, display their goods, as sign-boards to the petty thief; here, stores of old iron and bones, and heaps of mildewy fragments of woollen-stuff and linen, rust and rot in the grimy cellars.”

While the neighborhood was clearly grimy and disreputable, it was a step up from Oliver's previous situation in the workhouse north of London. In 1834, the New Poor Law was enacted, which required parishes around England to establish workhouses to take care of the poor. In return, they could apply for government aid. While the law was created to help those who would otherwise be without a home or a job, the workhouses were miserable living situations in which no freedom was given, families were often separated, and people, even children, were treated like slaves in return for the minimum basic comforts required for staying alive.

Dickens also shows a brighter, cleaner picture of London in the life of Mr. Brownlow, who lives on the Strand. This neighborhood was a hub for theatre and nightlife in Victorian times, and the comfortable life to which Oliver is introduced here exists alongside the poverty in the London of Fagin, Sykes, and Nancy.



- ★ Bethnal Green – The neighborhood where Nancy and Bill Sikes live.
- ★ London Bridge – Where Nancy arranges to meet Mr. Brownlow to return Oliver.
- ★ Saffron Hill – The run-down neighborhood where Fagin and the orphan boys live.
- ★ The Strand – The fashionable entertainment district where Mr. Brownlow lives.

#### Oliver! Fun Facts

- *Oliver!* has played in 22 different languages: Basque, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, Faroese, Finnish, French, Frisian, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Slovakian, Spanish and Swedish.
- The name 'Artful Dodger' is variously translated. In Hungarian it is Pitkakynsi meaning light-fingered. In Swedish it is Raven meaning the sly and cunning fox. In Hebrew it is Ha'Chamkan which translates as Slippery Roger.
- In *Food Glorious Food* the boys dream of cold jelly and custard but in foreign translations of productions, some of the local delicacies boys dream of are; a fresh fish (Finland), goulash soup and chestnut puree (Hungary), huge cakes and pork chops (Poland), meat pudding (Sweden), porkham (Japan).

# Oliver!: The Synopsis

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*Oliver!* begins in the workhouse where the orphan Oliver Twist was born and raised, and at the beginning of the story he is nine years old. The young boys of the workhouse dream of more decadent meals while eating their daily supper of gruel. When Oliver finishes his bowl, he does something unheard of: he asks for more. This gets him kicked out of the workhouse orphanage and sent to work for the undertaker, Mr. Sowerberry. Meanwhile, Mr. Bumble the beadle seduces Widow Corney the matron.

At the undertaker's, Oliver is eating scraps and sleeping under the table; he sings "Where is Love?" One of the other workers makes fun of Oliver's mother, for which Oliver fights him and then runs away. Away from the workhouse and the undertaker, he decides he should move to London. When he arrives after seven days of travel, he meets the Artful Dodger, who brings him back to live with Mister Fagin and his group of pick-pocketing orphans.

The orphans all welcome him ("Consider Yourself") and teach him to pick pockets in return for Fagin's favor and hospitality ("You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two"). Nancy, the live-in girlfriend of abusive ex-pickpocket Bill Sikes, comes to visit the boys and takes a liking to Oliver. Then Dodger takes Oliver out on his first pick-pocketing mission. Their attempt to rob Mr. Brownlow goes awry, and Oliver falls and hurts himself. The other boys flee the scene of the crime, leaving Oliver alone and injured.

There is a trial in which Oliver is brought before the Magistrate and accused of theft, but a book-stall owner comes to his defense and clears his name. Mr. Brownlow sees Oliver's youth and innocence and when the boy faints after the trial, Brownlow takes him in. Back at Fagin's, the Dodger tells of Oliver's arrest, and Fagin and Sikes decide to kidnap Oliver in order to protect themselves. At first Nancy refuses to help, but Sikes physically abuses her into submission.



Oliver dares to ask for more gruel

Back at Mr. Brownlow's house, Oliver is being taken care of and recovering from his illness. Oliver offers to run an errand for Brownlow, and while he is out, Nancy and Sikes ambush him and bring him back to Fagin despite his protests. Meanwhile, back at the workhouse, Mr. Bumble and Widow Corney find out that Oliver may have wealthy relatives, and their path to pursue his wealth leads them to Mr. Brownlow, who turns out to be Oliver's great-uncle.

Still holding onto her fondness for Oliver, Nancy visits Brownlow and arranges to bring Oliver to him at London Bridge. Bill Sikes secretly follows her on this mission, knocks Oliver unconscious, and beats Nancy to death. He runs off with Oliver, leaving Nancy's body to be discovered by Brownlow. Bill appears and attempts to hold Oliver hostage, but Bill is killed and Oliver is rescued and sent to live with Brownlow. Fagin decides to use the chaos and misery as an opportunity to turn his life around.

## *Oliver!*: The Characters

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**Oliver Twist** – The main character of the story. An orphan who grew up in a workhouse and runs away to London, where he joins other orphans in picking pockets until he finds his family.

**Mr. Bumble** – The beadle who runs the workhouse in which Oliver grew up. Kicks Oliver out, but then wishes to take advantage of the family money he may have.

**Widow Corney** – The matron of the workhouse and Mr. Bumble’s love interest. Also tries to get money out of Oliver’s situation.

**Mr. Sowerberry** – The undertaker for whom Oliver is sent to work when he is kicked out of the workhouse.

**Charlotte Sowerberry** – The undertaker’s daughter and love interest of Noah Claypole.

**Noah Claypole** – an older boy who works for the undertaker. He flirts with Charlotte and makes fun of Oliver.

**The Artful Dodger** – an orphan boy in London and one of Fagin’s pick-pockets. He takes Oliver under his wing when he gets to London.

**Fagin** – a career criminal who takes in the homeless children of London in exchange for their picking pockets for him.

**Nancy** – The girlfriend of Bill Sikes who sometimes visits Fagin’s children and takes a liking to Oliver. She dies trying to return him to his family.

**Bill Sikes** – An ex-pickpocket of Fagin and Nancy’s abusive boyfriend. Occasionally still joins Fagin in crime.

**Mr. Brownlow** – A rich man in London who Oliver and the Dodger try to pick-pocket. He takes Oliver in and is eventually discovered to be his great-uncle.

### *Oliver!* Vocabulary

- **Undertaker** – A person whose job is to prepare funerals. Undertakers also prepare dead bodies for burial or cremation.
- **Beadle** – An officer of a church, school, or, in the case of *Oliver!* a workhouse.
- **Matron** – The woman in charge of housing and caring for children at a boarding school or workhouse.
- **Magistrate** – A judge in a court that deals with minor offences, such as the pick-pocketing for which Oliver gets in trouble.

## Important Themes

**Poverty and power** are two of the most pervasive connected themes of *Oliver!* Almost everyone in the play suffers for want of money. The relationship between the amount of money someone has and the amount of power this gives them over other people is clear from the start. Mr. Bumble and Widow Corney are not terribly wealthy, but they have more money than the orphans who depend on them, and therefore have the power to control their livelihood. While the workhouse is the standard, societally-approved alternative to having children live on the streets, it gives the orphans neither happiness nor prospects; they are given the bare minimum to live and no options to escape.

In the world of *Oliver!*, the characters without money have to gain freedom through dishonesty. Fagin and his crew of pickpockets survive outside of society by thievery, living in a culture of moral ambiguity, full of imbalanced and manipulative relationships, often fueled by selfishness. Out of the adults in Oliver's world, Nancy and Mr. Brownlow are the only two who seem to give anything to Oliver without looking for something in return. Nancy is a lower-class female in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; she has too many odds against her to afford selflessness and she is killed for her efforts. Mr. Brownlow is kept from making sacrifices by his gender, money, and class. Luckily for him, Oliver is brought into the comfortable world of Mr. Brownlow at the end of the play, and while the darker side of London still exists alongside it, Fagin's final song offers the potential for change.



Oliver out on his first pickpocketing mission

**Love** and human relationships are also themes explored in *Oliver!* One of the most pressing questions and most touching songs in the play is “Where is Love?” Being loved is a feeling Oliver has never experienced, and he has no idea if or when it will ever happen. When he escapes the unfeeling workhouse and the abusive undertaker, he finds the Artful Dodger and Fagin, who offer protection and inclusion. While being told to “consider himself” one of the gang, it does not ring true as genuine love. Fagin uses the boys for his own financial benefit, and when Oliver goes out on his first pick-pocketing mission, the other boys abandon him at the first sign of trouble. However, this leads him to the genuine, familial love of Mr. Brownlow, who is willing to struggle to get Oliver back and keep him safe.

Another exploration of love we see in the play is the love that Nancy has for Bill Sikes. This is an example of the sort of unequal and manipulative relationships that can come from desperation. Nancy is not in a socially advantageous position on her own, but Sikes has made his way to a place

of comfort through brutality in the criminal world of London. Living with him offers Nancy a similar social position, though her level of comfort and security is not quite on the level with his, given his violent outbursts towards her. However, through her hardships she somehow retains the capacity for love, both for Sikes and for Oliver.

**Charity** is another major theme in *Oliver!* as it is in all the works of Dickens. However, *Oliver!* does not simply lecture on the importance of charity and taking care of the less fortunate, but it provides a critique of the structures in society that exist to be helpful and are in fact damaging. Oliver's brushes with the established social system include living at the workhouse, his "apprenticeship" at the undertaker's, and being under trial for the thievery of which he was innocent. None of these are effective ways of taking care of him or anyone else, and he is better and better off the further he is from something that looks like an organization. While Fagin takes care of him better than the workhouse, the ring of pickpockets is still run like a business, and it continues to run at the expense of those involved in it. It takes the personal, familial care of Mr. Brownlow for Oliver to be safe. Charity takes more than a government establishing programs or disconnected people putting money in a bucket; it takes genuine, personal concern for individuals and specific understanding of what they need. Dickens shows a dark world in which this is very rare and he provides no real solution to the problems he presents, but in *Oliver!* we see one inspiring case of a life that seeks improvement in many places but is ultimately saved by love.



The cast of *Oliver!* at Trinity Rep performing "Consider Yourself"

## UNIT 2: ENTERING THE TEXT

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### Make Your Own Adaptation:

Use the following short scene from *Oliver Twist* to have students create their own adaptation.

Things to consider when adapting the scene:

- Where and when does the scene take place in the novel? Do you want to change that in the adaptation?
- Do you want to use the dialog that Dickens provides, or do you want to change it?
- Should there be stage directions to indicate physical movement or vocal intonations in the script?
- Should anything from the excerpt be excluded from the adaptation? Should something be added?
- Lionel Bart added music to the story of *Oliver Twist* for *Oliver!* Should this scene include song and/or dance?

Break the students up into groups and have each group perform their version of the scene. Don't be afraid to be creative! (*Oliver Twist* in the future? Underwater? In space? As pirates?!)

"Do you live in London?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes. I do, when I'm at home," replied the boy. "I suppose you want some place to sleep in to-night, don't you?"

"I do, indeed," answered Oliver. "I have not slept under a roof since I left the country."

"Don't fret your eyelids on that score," said the young gentleman. "I've got to be in London to-night; and I know a 'spectable old gentleman as lives there, wot'll give you lodgings for nothink, and never ask for the change—that is, if any genelman he knows interduces you. And don't he know me? Oh, no! Not in the least! By no means. Certainly not!"

The young gentleman smiled, as if to intimate that the latter fragments of discourse were playfully ironical; and finished the beer as he did so.

This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted; especially as it was immediately followed up, by the assurance that the old gentleman referred to, would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place, without loss of time. This led to a more friendly and confidential dialogue; from which Oliver discovered that his friend's name was Jack Dawkins, and that he was a peculiar pet and protege of the elderly gentleman before mentioned."

Additionally, you can have the students adapt a work they've read in class or another popular book or movie. Challenge them to tell the entire story in five minutes!

#### Discussion Questions

1. How do different adaptations change the storyline?
2. Does it make you see the story differently? Does it make you relate to the characters differently?

## Social Consciousness and Change:

In his writing, Charles Dickens focused largely on the social issues of his time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, poverty (especially in children) and society's ways of dealing with it was a huge political issue, as it still is today. Dickens provides a sympathetic and very personal exploration of those and need. He also critiques the coping strategies of these people and the systems provided to help them.

Questions to consider:

- Who are the people in today's society who are most like Oliver? Most like Nancy? Most like Fagin and his crew of pickpockets?
- What structures in society exist to help these people?
- Do these structures work? What is good and bad about them? What could be done to improve upon them?
- What can you do to help?
- Are there any books or authors besides Dickens who have written about social issues? Did you enjoy these books? Did they change or expand your point of view?

**Exercise:** Using newspapers, magazines, and websites, find images or stories of today that remind you of the characters and situations in *Oliver!* Make a collage of what wealth and poverty look like today and compare it to what is shown in the musical or in Dickens' book. What has changed? What has stayed the same? What images or stories speak most strongly to you?

## Inequitable Distribution of Resources:

*Poverty is a major theme in Oliver! This exercise demonstrates what it might feel like to have less than someone else and how a hierarchy of power might work.*

### Activity

Scatter many of something small (buttons, M&Ms, etc.) in a defined space. Break the students into three groups. Group 1 gets to go first, and they have 15 seconds to pick up as many objects as possible. Group 2 goes second, and they have 10 seconds. Group 3 goes last, and they only have 5 seconds.

### Discussion Questions

1. Ask each group how it felt to have access to what resources they did. Did they feel resentful towards people who got more time?
2. How did it feel to be allowed to pick up objects when there were only a few left? Did the first group realize how their actions affected those who came after?
3. Where do we see this kind of situation in our own lives? Apply the discussion to the play.
4. Are there other situations in the play where things are distributed in unfair ways?



Impoverished ex-prisoners at a refuge offering soup for 2d a bowl in London in the late 1800's

## Building a Character:

Oliver is an orphan, without parents or family to love him or take care of him. If you were Oliver or one of the other orphans in the workhouse, what would your family be like? Write a letter to your ideal parents, describing the life you'd like to live with them and telling them what love and family mean to you. How are things in the workhouse, and how would life improve if you had parents?

## Creating a Production:

*Oliver!* has been produced countless times since its premiere in 1960. Many of these productions have had different directors, actors, and designers working to make the play different from any other production audiences had seen before. Take the part of a director, designer, or producer and think about the following questions:

- What actors would you cast in your production of *Oliver*? Are there any celebrities or people you know who would make a good Nancy? A good Fagin? A good Artful Dodger?
- What would the stage look like in your production? Consider how you would accommodate all of the different scenes that happen during the play. Draw a picture of your dream set for *Oliver!* and explain why it looks like it does and what scenes would happen where.
- Costumes are an important part of the theatre. Pick your favorite character in *Oliver* and draw a picture of what you think they would wear. You could also alter the time period – what would Oliver be wearing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## Song Lyrics Exercise:

Read the lyrics from the songs in *Oliver!* How do they relate to the themes of the play? What do we learn about the characters, their situations, and their feelings through the lyrics?

### Where is Love?

OLIVER:

Where is love?  
Does it fall from skies above?  
Is it underneath the willow tree  
That I've been dream of?  
Where is she?  
Who I close my eyes to see?  
Will I ever know the sweet "hello"  
That's only meant for me?  
Who can say where she may hide?  
Must I travel far and wide?  
'Til I am bedside the someone who  
I can mean something to ...  
Where...?  
Where is love?  
Who can say where...she may hide?  
Must I travel...far and wide?  
'Til I am beside...the someone who  
I can mean...something to...  
Where?  
Where is love?

### Consider Yourself:

DODGER:

Consider yourself at home  
Consider yourself one of the family  
We've taken to you so strong  
It's clear we're going to get along  
Consider yourself well in  
Consider yourself part of the furniture  
There isn't a lot to spare  
Who cares? Whatever we've got, we  
share!

If it should chance to be  
We should see  
Some harder days  
Empty larder days  
Why grouse?  
If it should chance we meet  
Somebody  
To foot the bill  
Then the drinks are on the house!  
Consider yourself our mate  
We don't want to have no fuss,  
For after some consideration, we can  
state  
Consider yourself  
One of us!

Below: Phineas Peters as Oliver and  
Noah Parets as the Artful Dodger



As Long As He Needs Me

NANCY:

As long as he needs me...  
I know where I must be.  
I'll cling on steadfastly...  
As long as he needs me.

As long as life is long...  
I'll love him right or wrong,  
And somehow, I'll be strong...  
As long as he needs me.

If you are lonely  
Then you will know...

When someone needs you,  
You love them so.

I won't betray his trust...  
Though people say I must.

I've got to stay true, just  
As long as he needs me.

Food, Glorious Food

WORKHOUSE BOYS:

Is it worth the waiting for?  
If we live 'til eighty four  
All we ever get is gru...el!  
Ev'ry day we say our prayer --  
Will they change the bill of fare?  
Still we get the same old gru...el!  
There's not a crust, not a crumb can we  
find,  
Can we beg, can we borrow, or cadge,  
But there's nothing to stop us from  
getting a thrill  
When we all close our eyes and  
imag...ine

Food, glorious food!  
Hot sausage and mustard!  
While we're in the mood --  
Cold jelly and custard!  
Peas, pudding and saveloys!  
What next is the question?  
Rich gentlemen have it, boys --  
In-di-gestion!

Food, glorious food!  
We're anxious to try it.  
Three banquets a day --  
Our favourite diet!

Just picture a great big steak --  
Fried, roasted or stewed.  
Oh, food,  
Wonderful food,  
Marvellous food,  
Glorious food.

Right: Rachel Warren as Nancy  
and Phineas Peters as Oliver



## Scenes from the Play:

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*Scene 1: (2 people) Oliver has just arrived in London and meets the Artful Dodger.*

OLIVER

Do you live in London?

DODGER

When I'm at home. I suppose you want some place to sleep tonight, don't you? Are you accommodated?

OLIVER

No....I don't think so...

DODGER

Than accommodated you shall be, me old mate. There's a certain house – and I know a respectable old gentleman lives there, wot'll give you lodgin's for nothink, and never ask for the change...that is, if any other gentleman wot he knows interduces yer. And does he know me? I should say he does!

OLIVER

Who is the respectable old gentleman, then? Is he a charity gentleman?

DODGER

Well, I wouldn't eggzackly say that...not eggzackly. But if I interduces someone it's alright, on account of I happen ter be a pertickler favorite of Mister Fagin...that's his name – Mister Fagin. By the way, if I'm interducing you to Fagin, I better know who *you* are, me old china plate.

OLIVER

My name is Oliver. Oliver Twist.

DODGER

And my name's Jack Dawkins – better known among me more hintimate friends as the Artful Dodger.

OLIVER

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Dawkins.

DODGER

Come to think of it, I ain't got no hintimate friends. Still, what's the difference, me old pork sausage, you're coming with me.

*Scene 2: (2 people) Mr. Bumble and Widow Corney run the workhouse where Oliver has just caused a stir. Mr. Bumble declares his affection for the widow.*

WIDOW CORNEY

Hush, Mr. Bumble, you've just had quite a turn. Sit down and have a nice cup of tea. (SHE pours tea.)

MR. BUMBLE

It's nice to be appreciated, Mrs. Corney. These here pauper orphans in this here workhouse don't appreciate me. Them paupers are not contented.

WIDOW CORNEY

Of course they're not. When would they be? Sweet, Mr. Bumble?

MR. BUMBLE

Very sweet, indeed, m'am. (HE sips his tea, spreads his pocket handkerchief over his fat knees, heaves a deep sigh and looks at the cat basket.) You have a cat, ma'm, I see.

WIDOW CORNEY

I'm so fond of them you can't imagine, Mr. Bumble. And they're fond of their home, too.

MR. BUMBLE

Mrs. Corney, ma'm. (Making time with the teaspoon.) I must say that any cat that could live with you and not be fond of its home, must be an idiot, m'am, and don't deserve to live in it.

WIDOW CORNEY

Oh, Mr. Bumble!

MR. BUMBLE

It's no use disguising facts, m'am. An idiot! I would drown such a cat myself – with pleasure!

WIDOW CORNEY

Then you're a cruel man...a very hard-hearted man and all.

MR. BUMBLE

Hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney? Hard? Are you hard-hearted, Mrs. Corney?

WIDOW CORNEY

Dear me! What a very curious question coming from a single man to a widow lady. What can you want to know for?

MR. BUMBLE

(putting down the tea cup) Allow me to explain, Mrs. Corney. (HE kisses her.)

WIDOW CORNEY

Mr. Bumble, I shall scream!

*Scene 3: (3 people) Oliver is working at the undertaker's and gets in a fight with Noah.*

CHARLOTTE

Good morning, Noah. I saved a nice little bit of bacon for you from master's breakfast. Oliver, take these bits and your tea and go over there and eat 'em. And make haste, 'cos they'll want you in the shop soon.

NOAH

D'you hear, Workhouse?

CHARLOTTE

Lor, Noah! What a tease you are! Let the boy alone.

NOAH

Let him alone? I'm giving the boy a change, you silly thing! Ev'ryone lets him alone. His father left him alone. His mother left him alone. They all left him alone except dear, old kind Noah. Eh, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

Oh, you are the one!

NOAH

(to OLIVER) Hey, Workhouse! How's your mother?

OLIVER

You leave my mother out of this. She's dead.

NOAH

What did she die of, Workhouse? Shortness of breath? (HE laughs.)

OLIVER

Never you mind.

NOAH

Oh, but I do mind.

OLIVER

Well, you'd better not say anymore!

NOAH

Better not! The cheek of it! Oh, your mother was a nice one, she was! Yer know, Workhouse, yer mother was a regular right-down bad'un. And it's a good thing she died when she did or she'd have been hard laboring, or transported, or hung.

*(Music begins. OLIVER rushes at NOAH, knocks him to the ground and begins to beat him.)*

NOAH

*(shouting)* Help! He'll murder me! He's gorn mad! Help, Charlotte!

*Scene 4: We see Nancy and Bill at home.*

NANCY

Oh, it's good to have you back safe. You know how I worry when you're out. Come upstairs. I've a pot on the stove.

SYKES

Somebody must find out what's at the office. Go to Fagin now, and collect the money he owes me.

NANCY

I'll be blessed if I will before daylight. Come to bed, Bill.

SYKES

My night wasn't so good. I need you to visit Fagin, the old miser, and collect what he owes.

NANCY

And as I don't want to, it's rather more no than yes with me.

SYKES

You'll go.

NANCY

No, I won't.

SYKES

Yes, you will.

*(HE kisses her passionately. Music.)*

NANCY

Oh, Bill, you do know how to convince me. I'll head right off now.

SYKES

And I'm to bed. *(HE exits.)*

NANCY

*(calling after him)* Do eat from the pot, Bill. And stoke the fire.

# FURTHER READING AND WATCHING

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## Other novels by Charles Dickens:

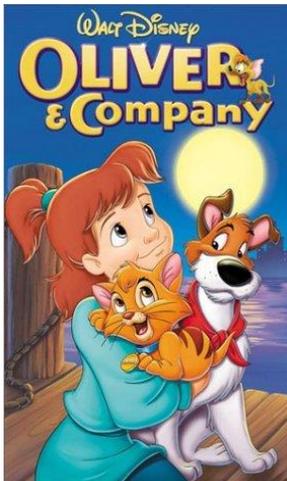
- *Hard Times*
- *A Tale of Two Cities*
- *A Christmas Carol*
- *Great Expectations*
- *Nicholas Nickleby*
- *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*



Charles Dickens

## Other adaptations of *Oliver Twist*:

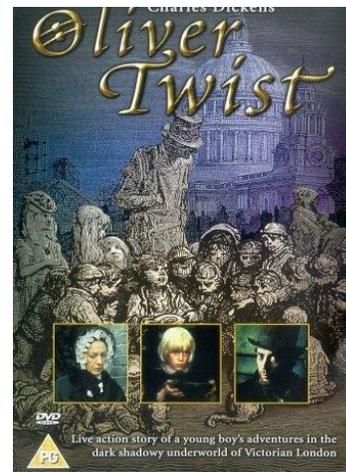
**Oliver & Company (1988):**  
In which Oliver is an orphan cat and Fagin and his gang are dogs.



**Oliver! (1968)**  
The musical film which won an Academy Award for Best Picture.



**Oliver Twist (1982)**  
An adaptation of the novel, with Tim Curry as Bill Sykes.



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