

**KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER:**

# CHARLES DICKENS Oliver Twist



**Core Knowledge**

**What was life like in Victorian London?**

- The population grew rapidly, which led to overcrowding.
- The city was polluted and unhygienic.
- There was a drastic difference in the quality of life for the rich and poor. This led to **social inequality**.
- Poor Victorians didn't have enough food and were often **malnourished**.
- Poor Victorians lived in extreme **poverty**.
- Poor children often worked to provide for their families.
- Children from wealthier families received an education.

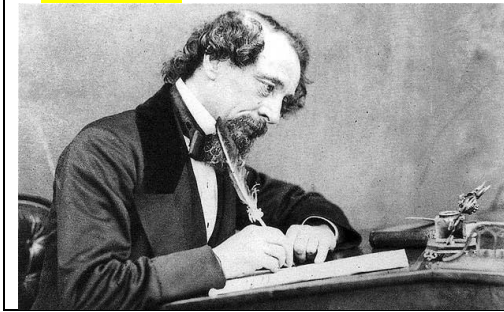
**How did workhouses impact life in the Victorian era?**

- **Workhouses** became more common during the Victorian era.
- Desperate poor people would go to the workhouse in exchange for food and shelter.
- Workhouse life was very hard. People were given hardly any food and had hard and dangerous, tiring work to do.
- Workhouses were designed to be so **severe** that no one would want to seek help from them unless they were desperate.



**Who is Charles Dickens?**

- Charles Dickens wrote the novel 'Oliver Twist'.
- His father was sent to prison for owing money. Dickens had to work in a factory to help pay off the money his father owed.
- Dickens did not agree with how the poor were treated and tried to raise awareness of this through his stories. This makes them **social commentaries**.



**How did social inequality lead to crime and how were crimes punished in the Victorian era?**

- Crime, particularly theft, was a common problem in cities.
- Most crime was carried out by people in poverty.
- Punishments were **severe**: common punishments were imprisonment, hanging or transportation.
- **Exploitation** of children was common: children were often used to steal things.



**Plot**

Oliver is taken to the workhouse just after he is born. His mother died giving birth to him. The conditions in the workhouse are dire; it is run by the corrupt Mr and Mrs Bumble who water down gruel, the food the boys eat, to keep the extra money for themselves. When he is older, he is nominated to ask for more food because the boys are starving.

The workhouse board think Oliver is ungrateful for asking for more food. He is then kicked out of the workhouse and sold to the Sowerberry family to be an undertaker's apprentice. He is bullied by the malicious Noah Claypole, a poor child also looked after by the Sowerberrys. They fight and Oliver is locked up.

Oliver runs away to London. After a long and difficult journey, he meets Dodger and is introduced to Fagin's gang. Oliver is naïve and doesn't realise that Fagin is also corrupt and exploits the children, making them pickpocket for him.

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

Oliver is used by Bill Sikes in a burglary. Although Bill threatens to shoot Oliver, Oliver refuses to break the law so he makes noise to wake the people in the house. They fail, Oliver is shot, 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 brutally murders her. Fagin is discovered and sent to prison, Dodger is transported to Australia and Bill dies trying to run away.

Oliver discovers that his mother was related to the Maylies. He and joins them and Mr. Brownlow to live happily ever after.

**Key Vocabulary**

Word	Meaning	Image
<b>brutal</b>	Describes something or someone very cruel and violent.	
<b>characterisation</b>	What a writer makes a character like (as a fictional 'person').	

<b>corrupt</b>	Describes someone who uses their power in a dishonest or illegal way in order to make life better for themselves.	
<b>exploitation</b>	The act of treating someone unfairly to benefit from their work.	
<b>malicious</b>	Describes someone who does or says things that are meant to upset someone.	
<b>malnourished</b>	Describes someone who is weak and in bad health because of a lack of food.	
<b>manipulate</b>	To control or influence someone or something unfairly.	
<b>moral</b>	A lesson that can be learnt from a story.	
<b>naïve</b>	Describes someone who doesn't have the experience of how complicated life can be and therefore trusts people too much.	
<b>poverty</b>	The state of being extremely poor.	
<b>severe</b>	Describes something very strict or harsh.	
<b>social commentary</b>	Writing about issues in society.	
<b>social inequality</b>	When people in society do not have the same status, rights or opportunities	
<b>unpredictable</b>	Describes someone who is likely to change suddenly and without reason.	
<b>victim</b>	Someone who has been harmed, often by other people.	
<b>villain</b>	A bad person in a story, who harms other people or breaks the law to get what they want. If someone acts like a <b>villain</b> , they would be described as <b>villainous</b> .	
<b>vulnerable</b>	Describes someone who is in a situation where they could be easily harmed.	
<b>workhouse</b>	Created by the government; buildings where desperate people would go to work in exchange for food and shelter.	