

Week 1

TREATS OF OLIVER TWIST'S BIRTH, GROWTH, EDUCATION AND BOARD

Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, there is one anciently common to most towns: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse Oliver was born. His mother died the same night. Not even a promised reward of £10 could produce any information as to the boy's father, or the name of his mother- a woman, young, frail, and delicate- a stranger to the parish.

"How comes he to have any name at all, then?" said Mrs. Mann (who was responsible for the early bringing up of the workhouse children) came to Mr. Bumble, the parish beadle.

The beadle drew himself up with great pride, and said, "I invented it. We name our foundings in alphabetical order. The last was a S; Swubble I named him. This was a T; Twist I named *him*. I have got names ready made to the end of the alphabet, and all the way through it again, when we come to Z."

"Why, you're quite a literary character, sir," said Mrs. Mann.

Oliver, being now nine years old, was removed from the tender mercies of Mrs. Mann, in whose wretched home not one kind word or look had ever lighted the gloom of his infant years, and was taken into the workhouse.

Now the members of the board, who were long-headed men, had just established the rule that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they) of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. All relief was inseparable from the workhouse, and the thin gruel issued three times a day to its inmates.

The system was in full operation for the first six months after Oliver Twist's admission, and boys

having generally excellent appetites, Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation. Each boy had one porringer of gruel, and no more. At last the boys got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one, who was tall for his age and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook's shop), hinted darkly to his companions that unless he had another basin of gruel *per diem* he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, a weakly youth of tender age. He had a wild, hungry eye, and they implicitly believed him. A council was held, lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening and ask for more, and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The evening arrived, the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper to ladle out the gruel; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him, the gruel was served out, and a long grace was said over the short commons.

The gruel disappeared, the boys whispered to each other, and winked at Oliver, while his next neighbours nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table, and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity, "Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man, but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then said, "What!"

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."



"Oliver asking for more", 1894 engraving

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle, pinioned him in his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle.

The board were sitting in solemn conclave when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing a gentleman in a high chair, said, "Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

"For *more*?" said the chairman. "Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?"

"He did, sir," replied Bumble.

"That boy will be hung," said a gentleman in a white waistcoat. "I know that boy will be hung."

Nobody disputed the opinion. Oliver was ordered into instant confinement, and a bill was next morning pasted on the outside of the workhouse gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off their hands. In other words, five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling.

Mr. Gamfield, the chimney sweep, was the first to respond to this offer.

"It's a nasty trade," said the chairman of the board.

"Young boys have been smothered in chimneys before now," said another member.

"That's because they damped the straw afore they lit it in the chimbley to make 'em come down again," said Gamfield. "That's all smoke, and no blaze; vereas smoke only sinds him to sleep, and that ain't no use in making a boy come down. Boys is wery obstinite and wery lazy, gen'l'men, and there's nothink like a good hot blaze to make 'em come down with a run. It's humane, too, gen'l'men, acause, even if they've stuck in the chimbley, roasting their feet makes 'em struggle to hextricate theirselves."

The board consented to hand over Oliver to the chimney-sweep (the premium being reduced to £3 10s.), but the magistrates declined to sanction the indentures, and it was Mr. Sowerberry, the undertaker, who finally relieved the board of their responsibility.

Mrs. Sowerberry, a squeezed-up woman with a vixenish countenance, who saw no saving in parish children, who "always cost more to keep, than they're worth." greeted Oliver with "There! Get downstairs, little bag o' bones." With this, she opened a side door, and pushed Oliver down a steep flight of stairs into a stone cell, damp and dark, wherein sat a slatternly girl, in broken shoes and ragged stockings.

Oliver left the house in the early morning before anyone was stirring, struck across fields, and gained the high road outside the town. A milestone intimated that it was seventy miles to

London. In London he would be beyond the reach of Mr. Bumble; to London he would trudge.

Meanings

Learn the meanings by heart:

Prudent: wisdom, clever in doing things

Refrain: stop oneself from doing something

Frail: weak and delicate

Wretched: of poor quality, someone in a very unhappy state

Literary: educated

Gradual: slow and continuous

Inseparable: not able to be separated

Voracious: wanting great quantities of food

Implicitly: absolutely, in a way that is not directly expressed

Station: stand in a particular place

Reckless: not aware of danger or consequences

Temerity: a lot of confidence and boldness

Stupefied: Astonished and shocked, unable to think

Countenance: Appearance

Compose: calm down

Dispute: fight or an argument

Smothered: cooked

Obstinate: stubborn, refusing to listen

Sanction: approval from the head

Indentures: a legal agreement

Vixenish: Difficult to control

Trudge: a difficult walk

Comprehension

Where was Oliver born?

Why the author wants to refrain from mentioning the name of the place?

- The place is too good
- The place is not very famous
- The place is not very good
- Oliver will become famous in the future

What can be the meaning of the below line?

Not even a promised reward of £10 could produce any information as to the boy's father.

- The boy's father gave £10 to the mother
- The boy's father gave reward of £10 to the work house
- The boy's father needed £10 to take away Oliver
- The boy's father's information provider would get £10

Was Oliver's mother a native of the parish?

Why should Oliver not have a name?

- Because he already had a name
- Because he would get a new name from the work house
- Because his mother wanted a name for him
- Because he was an orphan

Write down the naming method followed and how Oliver got his name?

What does the below line tell about the early life of Oliver?

in whose wretched home not one kind word or look had ever lighted the gloom of his infant years

Which one word in the above line tells about Oliver's state in infant years?

Which line tells the main idea of paragraph 5?

- The board had a meal plan for the children
- All the children got food; enough to not starve them
- The gruel was the worst food item on the menu
- The quality of food was not good and so was the quantity

Write in your own words, the state of Oliver's diet and appetite during the first six months and which incident led to him getting into trouble?

What is the author trying to show in the below line?

Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery.

- Be sarcastic about Oliver's mistake
- Be angry at Oliver's mistake
- Justify Oliver's mistake
- Identify how other kids managed to make Oliver fall into mischief

What action can be characterized of the way Oliver asked for more?

- Anger
- Demand
- Sarcasm
- Request

Write down the line that throws light on the master's response to Oliver's request for more:

What was the name of the master who served the porridge?

Which expression did the master server got from the board. Write down the sentence that indicates your response.

What punishment was finalized for Oliver?

Which line tells about the desperation of the board to get rid of Oliver?

Who was the first one to come?

- A store keeper
- A chimney sweeper
- A judge
- A trader

Which words tell about the general appearance of Mrs. Sowerberry?

What did she think of parish children?

- Useful for house chores
- Lovable for adoption
- Irritating for sneaking around
- Useless with no importance

Sentences

Countenance

Abandon

Stupefied

Write the summary of the above reading:

Copyright of PRO E.M.