

OLIVER TWIST

1st and 2nd of ESO





BEFORE GOING TO THE THEATRE

THE STORY

Oliver Twist is born in a workhouse in England, in the early 1800s. His mother dies after giving birth to him. He spends his first nine years in Mrs Mann’s workhouse, where he isn’t clothed or fed properly and is treated badly. On Oliver’s ninth birthday, Mr Bumble, the Director of the Board responsible for workhouses, takes Oliver back to the workhouse where he was born. Here, he and the other boys are fed each day on porridge. One day, Oliver is chosen to ask for more to eat and having done so, is beaten and locked in a room for a week. Oliver is sold to an undertaker. In this new home, he must eat the dog’s leftovers and sleep in the shop with the coffins. He is treated very badly and runs away. He decides to make his way to London where Oliver discovers that Rose is his aunt. Mr Brownlow adopts Oliver as his son and they move to live near Rose, her husband, Harry, and Mrs Maylie.

1. In pairs, students ask and answer the following questions. Or, you can ask the questions and elicit the answers from the whole class.

a) What is a working-class family?

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b) What do you know about the life of a working-class child in England in the 19th century?

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c) What do you think happened to poor orphans in the 19th century?

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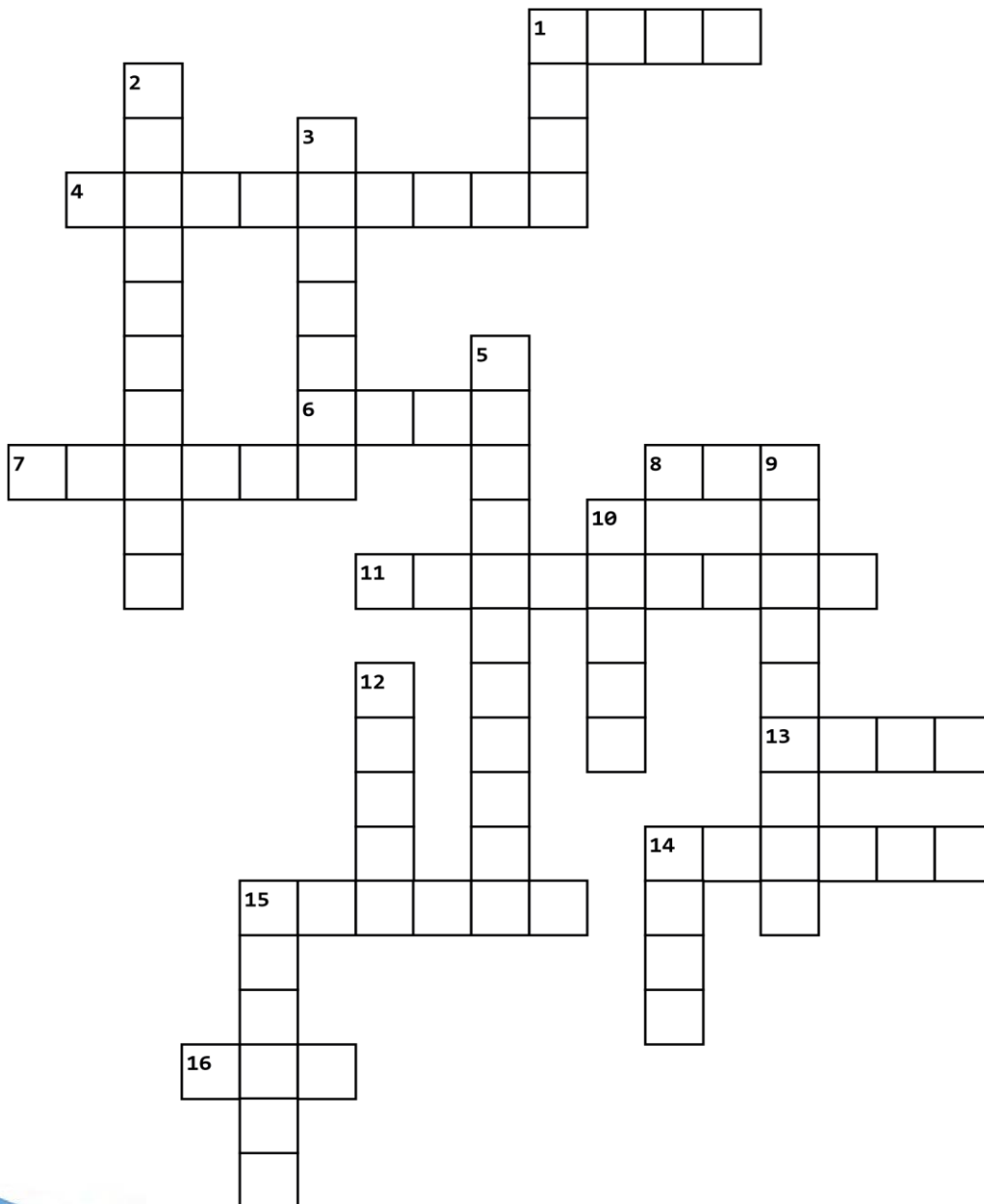
d) You are a poor orphan. Where would you live? What would you do?

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4. Complete the following crossword:





Across

- 1. lacking sufficient money to live at a standard considered comfortable or normal in a society.
- 4. (of a person) wretchedly unhappy or uncomfortable.
- 6. having little, or too little, flesh or fat on the body
- 7. sad because one has no friends or company.
- 8. bring one's hand or a tool or weapon into contact with (someone or something) quickly and forcefully.
- 11. cause to feel extreme fear.
- 13. in shut someone into a room or space by locking or fastening a door, lid, etc.
- 14. feeling or showing the need for food.
- 15. experience or be subjected to (something bad or unpleasant).
- 16. shed tears, typically as an expression of distress, pain, or sorrow.

Down

- 1. light in colour or shade; containing little colour or pigment.
- 2. afraid or anxious.
- 3. cruel behaviour or attitudes.
- 5. having or marked by bad fortune; unlucky.
- 9. shaking or quivering, typically as a result of anxiety, excitement, or frailty.
- 10. covered or marked with an unclean substance.
- 12. a person who steals another person's property, especially by stealth and without using force or threat of violence.
- 14. cause pain or injury.
- 15. fearful; frightened.

5. Here are four sentences from Oliver Twist. What do you think happens next? Finish the sentences in your own words.

a) Oliver was a frightened boy because . . .

.....

b) Fagin needed Oliver's help in order to...

.....

c) Oliver was trembling from cold and exhaustion and was in terrible pain because . . .

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6. **To play this game, split up the class into groups.** Hand out the image (have copies ready if you have a large class) so that each pair gets one each. Working together the students have to make up a very short story using some of the words. They can write the story down if they want. When they have finished students have a few minutes to remember their story so that they can tell it to somebody without looking. When the students have finished swap partners and get them to take it in turns to tell their story. The students should not read their stories, but do it from memory. Listeners can try to spot which words are being used.





7. The characters:

- a) **Oliver Twist:** The novel's protagonist. Oliver is an orphan who was born in a workhouse and is between nine and twelve years of age when the main action of the novel occurs. Though treated with cruelty for most of his life, he is an innocent child.
 - b) **Fagin:** A conniving career criminal. Fagin takes in homeless children and trains them to pick pockets for him. He rarely commits crimes himself, as he prefers to employ others to commit them.
 - c) **Mr. Brownlow:** A well-off, erudite gentleman who serves as Oliver's first benefactor.
 - d) **Mr. Bumble:** He is the church official for the workhouse where Oliver is born.
 - e) **Bill Sikes:** A professional burglar brought up in Fagin's gang. He likes his lifestyle.
 - f) **Nancy:** She is one of Fagin's pickpocket. Despite her criminal lifestyle, she is noble and has moral decency.
8. **Divide the class into pairs.** Assign five words from the exercise 4 to each pair of students. Students look up the definitions of their five words and make a sentence using each word in context. More than one pair can work on the same five words. Listen to the students' sentences and put a sentence for each word on the blackboard.



AFTER GOING TO THE THEATRE

9. Hello again! Did you enjoy the show? Let's see if you remember the story:

a) When does the story begin?

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b) Where does the story take place?

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c) Where does Oliver live?

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d) How old do you think Oliver is?

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10. **Somebody has mixed up the various parts of the story of Oliver Twist. Can you put them in the right order?**

- Bill Sikes wants Oliver to help him steal from Mr. Brownlow's house.**
- After being arrested for theft, Oliver meets Mr Bownlow at the police station.**
- Fagin teaches Oliver how to steal.**
- Mr Brownlow decides to help Oliver.**
- Mr Brownlow decides to adopt Oliver and Nancy.**
- Oliver becomes friends with Nancy.**
- Oliver becomes Mr. Sowerberry's apprentice.**
- Oliver grows up in a workhouse where he is bullied.**
- Oliver meets a gang of juvenile delinquents with Fagin at its head.**
- Oliver runs away and goes to London.**
- Sikes and Oliver are chased by the police over the rooftops of London.**



11. Match the names to the correct descriptions:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Oliver | A. person who helps Oliver escape the clutches of Fagin |
| 2. Mr Bumble | B. a soft-hearted woman. |
| 3. Sowerberry | C. a pickpocket. |
| 4. Fagin | D. the head of the young thieves. |
| 5. The Artful Dodger | E. Mr Brownlow's kind-hearted housekeeper. |
| 6. Nancy | F. undertaker to who Oliver appreciates. |
| 7. Mr. Brownlow | G. head of workhouse where Oliver is sent. |
| 8. Mrs. Bedwin | H. a young orphan who is often bullied. |
| 9. Bill Sikes | I. Nancy's boyfriend. |

12. Decide if the sentences are True or False:

PHRASE	TRUE OR FALSE
Oliver Twist comes from a big family.	
Oliver Twist was born in a hospital.	
Oliver Twist had a difficult childhood.	
Shakespeare wrote Oliver Twist.	
Fagin didn't help poor children.	



SPEAKING

13. Express your opinion:

This can be run as a debate in class (2 groups chosen, rest as audience) or in front of other classes, or as group discussions in class (2 'pro' and 2 'anti' in new groups). An introduction to the conventions of debate may be needed. Additional preparation time should be allowed first, possibly a slot for inputting language of debating/persuading, and there should be time for feedback, too.

- Was Mr. Sowerberry's influence on Oliver's life positive or negative?
- Are any scenes or characters extraneous and/or irrelevant?
- Consider Oliver's life as a child. Do you think that family is important? Why?

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