

A Summary of the Story

A pregnant woman arrives at a workhouse, gives birth to a boy, and dies. The child is brought up in the workhouse, where he is starved, beaten and bullied by the Workhouse Master, Mr Bumble. He is given the name 'Oliver Twist'.

One day when Oliver is ten years old, the orphans are so hungry that Oliver dares to ask for more food. For this crime he is further starved and beaten, and then sold as an apprentice to Mrs Sowerberry, the owner of an undertaking firm. There he is bullied by the older apprentice, Noah Claypole, until he finally runs away.

Oliver walks to London. On the way he meets a boy of his own age who introduces himself as 'the Artful Dodger'. The Dodger introduces Oliver to a 'kind old gentleman' who can provide him with food and accommodation. Oliver doesn't realise that the old man, Fagin, is running a gang of child prostitutes and pickpockets.

Fagin teaches Oliver how to pick pockets as a 'game', and then he allows the Dodger to take Oliver on his first pick-pocketing expedition. The Dodger picks the pocket of a wealthy gentleman, and runs away. Oliver is chased by the crowd and caught by a policeman. The magistrate, Mr Fang, wants to imprison Oliver; but just in time a witness arrives and says that Oliver is innocent. The wealthy gentleman, Mr Brownlow, takes pity on Oliver and offers him a home.

Fagin and his brutal accomplice Bill Sikes are worried that Oliver may tell the police about them, so they watch Mr Brownlow's house, and on the first occasion when Oliver goes out, they kidnap him. Oliver is imprisoned in a ruined house, where the only person who shows him any kindness is the young prostitute Nancy. Bill Sikes plans to burgle a large house, and takes Oliver with him - Oliver is small enough to climb through a cellar window. During the burglary Oliver is shot and wounded, and Bill runs away.

The owner of the house, Mrs Maylie, takes pity on Oliver and nurses him back to health. She also makes contact with Mr Brownlow, who is delighted to find Oliver again.

Nancy is afraid that Fagin will try to kill Oliver. She drugs Bill and slips out of the house, and visits Mr Brownlow, to warn him to protect Oliver. Mr Brownlow agrees to help, and makes an appointment to meet Nancy again at midnight on London Bridge a week later. However, Bill Sikes stops her from going out to this meeting.

Fagin hires a boy to spy on Nancy (the boy is Noah Claypole, the bully from the undertaker's in the town where Oliver was born). Noah follows Nancy the next time she goes to meet Mr Brownlow, and reports back to Fagin what he hears of their conversation.

Fagin passes this information on to Bill Sikes. Bill, believing that Nancy has betrayed him, murders her. He then goes on the run, ending up in an empty warehouse. As the crowd closes in on Sikes, he tries to escape over the roof, but he slips and falls, and dies, hanged in a noose of his own rope.

Fagin and his gang are arrested, and Fagin is condemned to death. Now Oliver is able to lead a happy life, looked after by Mr Brownlow and Mrs Maylie.