UNIT 10 : CHARLES DICKENS: *OLIVER TWIST* I

UNIT STRUCTURE

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the life and works of one of the greatest novelists of the world, namely Charles Dickens
- develop an idea on the late Victorian novels
- gain an insight into the historical background of the age
- form an idea of the background of the novel *Oliver Twist*
- summarise the content and context of the novel

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* which is the author's second novel. *Oliver Twist* which is subtitled as *The Parish Boy's Progress* was published in the year 1838. The novel chronicles the obstacles faced by the young protagonist Oliver and his struggle for survival in the face of perilous situations that he encounters. Oliver has to face extreme misery and suffering as he is an orphan confined within a workhouse, left to be exploited. Dickens, in this novel, vehemently criticises

the system of workhouses and the Poor Law Act that aggravated the misery of the paupers and increased crimes in the Victorian England. He gives a sordid description of the life of the social miscreants and the poor, living in the peripheries of the English society. The book exposes the maltreatment faced by young orphans in London, especially during the Victorian age. *Oliver Twist,* much like Dickens' other novels can be called a social novel as it invites the readers' attention towards child labour, juvenile criminals created by the society and the condition of paupers in the workhouses.

10.3 CHARLES DICKENS: THE NOVELIST

Dickens is one of the most significant novelists of the Victorian Age. Nineteenth Century was a period when Britain produced some of the best works in literature. This was caused mainly due to the changes brought about in the society by the preceding era with the coming of the French Revolution and also the effects of Industrial Revolution. Realism was seen in representation of the characters and their social conditions. Dickens was somewhat influenced by the Ben Jonsonian technique in his portrayal of characters, and as such his characters (even the dark and evil characters such as Fagin) often come out as caricatures. Dickens had written a wide range of fiction, the novels were primarily structured in episodes which regaled their readers. These include *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Little Dorrit*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations* among others. Some of his more mature works were *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*. By reading this unit you will learn about the life and the works of this great writer.

10.3.1 His Life

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, England. He was the second of eight children to John Dickens (1785-1851) and Elizabeth Dickens (1789-1863). His father was a clerk in the navy pay office. After his birth the family moved to Norfolk Street, Bloomsbury, and then, at the age of four they moved

to Chentham, where he spent his formative years until the age of eleven. The early part of Dickens' childhood was happy in Chentham where he attended a private school. Charles was playful as a child and was a voracious reader. He especially enjoyed the picaresque novels of Tobias Smolett and Henry Fielding. Unfortunately this period of bliss did not last for long. The financial position of the family forced them to move to Camden in London in 1822. Dickens' father was imprisoned in 1824 by his creditors for his inability to clear debt. His mother and his youngest siblings joined his father at the prison as it was the practice at the time.

Subsequently, Charles Dickens, then at the age of twelve was left under the care of Elizabeth Roylance, a family friend. She was an impoverished old lady, long known to their family, and whom Dickens later immortalised in the character of Mrs. Pipchin in *Dombey and Sons*. Later, he was moved to the house of an agent for the court, Archibald Russell, a kind old man who lived with his wife and their handicapped son, in Borough. They provided the inspiration for the Garlands in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Dickens later used the prison as a setting in *Little Dorrit* because for him it remained a symbol of the suffering and misery he and his family had to go through. Dickens was forced to leave school and work in a black ware house to afford his family. The strenuous and often harsh working conditions made a lasting impression on Dickens and later influenced his fiction becoming the foundation of his interest in the reform of socio-economic and labour conditions in England.

Charles was eventually sent to the Wellington House Academy in Camden Town, but he found that the school's environment was not good as the students were brutally treated by the headmaster and the teaching system was inept.

10.3.2 His Works

The misery that he witnessed during his childhood later

inspired much of his fiction especially that of *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist* which have become the classics of British literature. Dickens then started working as an office boy and became a reporter for the *Morning Chronicles*. He also started contributing articles to the periodicals such as the *Evening Chronicle* (1835), *Monthly Magazine* (1833- 35) among others. These writings were later republished as *Sketches by Boz*, *Every-day Life and Every-day People* (1836-37). He also succeeded in publishing *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (or *The Pickwick Papers*) in a serial format from April, 1836. *Pickwick Papers* was a series of anecdotes and stories concerning the members of a London club. The exploratory nature of the club allowed Dickens to place his characters anywhere in England and find themselves in various comic situations. The plot of these series received greater success when its protagonist Pickwick was imprisoned after getting entangled in the legal system. It was during this time that he met John Forster who became his close friend and biographer.

In 1837, Dickens and his wife Catherine Hogarth were trying to overcome the loss of the latter's Sister Mary. It was also the year in which the engaging tale of Oliver Twist began to appear in the fresh periodical *Bentley's Miscellany* of which Dickens was the first editor. This was followed by *Nicholas Nickleby*, also in the form of a monthly series. *Nicholas Nickleby* tells the tale of a nineteen year old boy, Nicholas, his mother and his sister, who are left penniless after the death of the father. He is soon sent by his uncle to work in Dotheboys' Hall, in which the young boys, mostly street urchins and orphans are maltreated. The independent spirit of Nicholas did not allow him to bear any mistreatment, and soon he flees along with his new found friend, Spikes and joins a theatre company. The novel is episodic in structure and is filled with the humour and optimism that we associate with Dickens. In 1840, a new weekly called *Master Humphrey's Clock* was launched, written wholly by Dickens. It contained sketches as well as installments of the full length-novels

such as *Old Curiosity Shop* and his long deliberated *Barnaby Rudge*. The novels became so popular that their connection with the weekly was dropped, and they were republished separately. In1842, Dickens and his wife Catherine made their first visit to America and were warmly received. Although his first impressions about the country were favourable, he was soon disillusioned by the society. He offended the American public with the part-travelogue and part-social pamphlet *American Notes* (1842). The American readers also did not like his stereotypical portrayal of Americans in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44).

Although *Martin Chuzzlewit* failed to draw the interests of the reading public, he was successful with *A Christmas Carol* (1843). *A Christmas Carol* was a part of Dickens' Christmas series, comprising *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Battle of Life*, and *The Haunted Man*. In 1844, after his long stay in Italy, he composed "Pictures from Italy" which was contributed to the *Daily News*, a new paper founded and edited by Dickens in 1846. He began writing *Dombey and Sons* (1848) during a visit to Switzerland in 1846. In 1850, he again started the weekly periodical *Household Words* and in 1849 it was incorporated into another periodical *All the Year Round* which he continued to edit until his death.

The period that followed was highly productive one for Dickens as he was able to compose some of the best known works. *David Copperfield* appeared in monthly numbers in 1849-50.Written in the first-person narrative, this ***bildungsroman*** showed the growth of its protagonist, David from childhood to adulthood as he learnt from the many experiences of life. This novel is considered as the most autobiographical of all his works. This was followed by *Bleak House* (1852- 53) and *A Child's History of England* (1851- 53). The former is a dark and complex novel that strongly criticised the abuses of the old court of Chancery. *Hard Times* followed in 1854 and was succeeded by *Little Dorrit* in 1855- 57 and *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859. In the manner of *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* was largely a critique of the education and the social system that gave too much



***Bildungsroman*:** a novel which shows the development of the mind and character of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood after going through varied experiences in life.

importance to '***Utilitarianism***'. The novel showed the demerits linked with the suppression of the creative and humane side of mankind. *A Tale of Two Cities* is a rendering of the French Revolution and its effect on the lives of its protagonists. It lacked the humour which is typically associated with Dickens and is considered one of his more serious works. The novel was largely influenced by Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution* which Dickens greatly admired. In the following decade, Dickens' two novels *Great Expectations* (1860-61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) was published.

During these years of utmost creativity, Dickens also involved himself in ***philanthropic*** activities, and at times engaged himself in ***amateur*** theatrical performances. In one such fund-raising programmes, he was introduced to the young actress Ellen Ternan. Dickens' admiration for her affected his marriage, and consequently he and Catherine separated in 1858. He tried to attempt public scandal and came out clean by making frequent public appearances. He involved himself in literary compositions and public readings of his own novels, and that kept him away from the thoughts of domestic unhappiness. Although these sessions were very successful, it was also physically and emotionally tiring for Dickens. When he revisited America in 1867- 68, he delivered a series of readings, and on his return toured the countryside of England. He had started working on his new novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. But suddenly he had an attack of stroke and five days later he passed away in 1870, leaving the work unfinished.



Utilitarianism: the system or ideology which gives importance to the economic use of the individual living in the society.

Philanthropic: charitable, generous.

Amateur: someone who is new in a profession or skill, a beginner.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: How do the characters of Charles Dickens appear?

Q 2: What marked a lasting impression on the life and works of Charles Dickens?

Q 3: Name some of the novels by Charles Dickens.

10.4 CONTEXT OF THE NOVEL

During the period beginning with the French Revolution (1789-92) and the succeeding Napoleonic era which lasted till the first two decades of the nineteenth century, England witnessed as well as became a part of numerous changes that began to unfold in Europe. Early in the French Revolution, many Englishmen enthusiastically welcomed the overthrow of the old order and tradition. But as violence and terror in France reached extreme heights, the English society underwent social stratification. The upper strata of the society, represented mostly by the governing classes were alarmed at the way certain events across Europe created radicalism and unrest among the common population. While the needy and the liberals were encouraged to protest for improved conditions, disorder, followed by repressive measures, became commonplace, particularly later when England was at war with France. This internal conflict within Europe led to hardship and poverty of the English people.

At the same time, the heavy tax that was imposed on the common people to support military resources increased the sufferings of the people. The upper sections of the British society did not have much to lose but the working classes were badly affected by inflation and food scarcity. Their hardships were multiplied when the government issued paper currency leading to further inflation. After the crowning of William IV as the King in 1830, the power was in the hands of the Whigs who favoured reform and change unlike the traditionalist Tories. Among the most urgently recommended steps was the call for parliamentary reform. In 1829, the first Catholic was admitted to Parliament. In spite of determined opposition in the House of Lords, the Reform Bill of 1832 was passed. The bill removed many of the problems in representation, and the middle class was enlarged. Then on 1833 came the beginning of the Child-Labour laws. Since that time, an increased amount of legislation was enacted to control the hours of labour and working conditions for children and women in manufacturing plants.

A new concept was also adopted to deal with the issue of poverty. This was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which further aggravated

the problem when the provisions were confined to only the aged and sick paupers as being eligible for relief. The able-bodied paupers were made to work in the workhouses under terrible conditions. Further, the inmates of the workhouses became objects of social stigma, and to further heighten the unpopularity of these institutions and its residents, the living arrangements in them were deliberately made harsh. In one way, the plan was successful. Within three years, the cost of poor relief was reduced by over one-third. However, the system was sharply criticised, and the increased prevalence of crime has been attributed to it. Dickens made the Poor Law of 1834 a conspicuous target of criticism in his novel *Oliver Twist*.

In 1837, Queen Victoria came to the throne of England as the long period of the rise of the middle-class was gaining grounds. At that time, Dickens's hugely popular character, Mr. Pickwick of *The Pickwick Paper* had already captured the attention of the reading public. At the same time, the troubles faced by young Oliver Twist were engaging the sympathies of a large audience. The coming of the Victorian Age led the then twenty-five-year-old Charles Dickens to literary fame that would take him to ever greater eminence throughout his life. *Oliver Twist* is an early example of the social novel and the book represents the various social evils of Dickens' time such as child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children. Dickens used his fiction as a way to mock the hypocrisies of his time by surrounding the novel's serious themes with sarcasm and dark humour. He was particularly interested in what came to be known as the "Condition of England" works, and this came about due to the influence of the French writer, Thomas Carlyle.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Mention some of the contexts out of which a novel like *Oliver Twist* emerged.

Q 5: Do you think that Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is a social novel?

10.5 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

The narrative of this wonderful novel, that has imbibed elements of the bildungsroman as well as the picaresque, has been summarised for our thorough understanding of the novel.

CHAPTERS 1 TO 7

Oliver Twist begins with the first chapter *Titled Treats Of The Place Where Oliver Was Born And Of The Circumstances Attending His Birth* and it opens with the description of workhouse in state of decay. A child is born in that unidentified place. While the infant is struggling to survive, the mother was quite close to death. She requests the doctor and the assisting pauper to bring the child to her. Soon after taking a look at it, she passes away. The pauper observed that she was without a wedding ring and concluded that the infant is ***illegitimate*** and unwanted. Thus, he becomes the new inmate of the ***parish***, and is clothed in old garments. He becomes a parish child who is unwanted and despised by everyone.



***Illegitimate*:** born out of wedlock or unmarried parents; unlawful.

***Parish*:** community Workhouse: an asylum or place intended for the healthy and young paupers.

***Unscrupulous*:** dishonest, corrupt.

Oliver as the infant is so named, is kept in the workhouse for some months, but later is transferred to a private asylum for children run by the ***unscrupulous*** Mrs. Mann. She is a woman who prospered by starving the children and using the charity money for her own benefit. Consequently, the children of that asylum died frequently due to malnourishment but she always succeeded in getting away as the report always confirmed that deaths were caused by natural causes or accidents. Here we see Dickens bringing out the true picture of the workhouses culture and the plight of the parish children. The Poor Law failed to protect the needs of the paupers and the needy.

Oliver spent the first nine years of his life here. We are introduced to Mr. Bumble, a minor church official and a corrupt boastful man, who is proud of his position. He tells Mrs Mann that he is there on business. He informs that he attempted to find the true identity of Oliver's parents but has failed. So the authorities instructed to send Oliver to be returned to his birthplace, that is the workhouse. In the meantime, Oliver is brought forth and introduced to Mr. Bumble, who takes him to his new home. That very evening, the

board in control of workhouse affairs meets where Oliver is summoned to face the body. After ***rebuking*** the little boy for the ingratitude shown by him, he is told that he will learn the skill of picking ***oakum*** from the very next morning.

Following this scene the author discloses that the authorities have made a new rule for the workhouse. The paupers are restricted to a very small portion of food, and are also deprived from other basic necessities so as to humble them. The policy succeeds in reducing the population of the workhouse as many of them perish subsequently. Meanwhile, the boys at the workhouse are very hungry and often they send one of them to ask for more food. One day it was Oliver's turn to do so. Oliver approaches the fat workhouse master and asks for more who is surprised and annoyed by his demand. In a state of ***agitation***, Bumble rushes to inform the board, which is in session and Oliver is instantly sentenced to ***confinement***.

The next morning, a notice is posted on the gate offering five pounds to anyone who will accept Oliver Twist as an apprentice. One morning, Gamfield, a passing chimney sweep sees the notice and expresses his willingness to take Oliver. The authorities reject his offer and later Mr. Sowerberry, agrees to take the boy to work for him. When they arrive at the ***undertaker's*** establishment, Mrs. Sowerberry permits Oliver to feast on leftovers neglected by their dog and is made to sleep beside the coffins. Dickens here represents the horrors undergone by the young child who is otherwise in need of care and security.

The next morning Oliver is awakened by a noise and he sees a ***repulsive*** looking youth kicking the outside door. The adolescent introduces himself as Noah Claypole and informs Oliver that he is his superior. The other boys as well as a girl called Charlotte treat Noah with respect for he enjoys the distinction of being a charity boy of known parentage. After spending some weeks at the Sowerberries, Oliver is assigned the duty of serving as a ***mute*** at the children's funerals.

After a month's probation is over, Oliver is formally apprenticed. He regularly attended many funerals, gaining an understanding of human ***avarice*** and ***hypocrisy***. Having Mr. Sowerberry pleased with his work, Oliver becomes the object of jealousy of Noah Claypole. The undertaker's regard for Oliver



Rebuking**:** scolding.
Oakum**:** a fiber soaked in tar used in ships.
Agitation**:** protest, sentenced to.
confinement**:** locked as a punishment.
Undertaker**:** person in charge of the graveyard and funerals.
Repulsive**:** disgusting.
Mute **:** a hired mourner at funerals arranged by the undertaker.
Avarice**:** greed.
Hypocrisy**:** saying or doing something that one does not mean.

also makes Mrs. Sowerberry his enemy, and Charlotte is against Oliver because of Noah. At dinner time one day, while Charlotte is out of the kitchen, Noah takes advantage of the opportunity to torment Oliver by questioning his mother's reputation. In an outburst of violent fury, Oliver punches the bigger boy and knocks him down on the floor. On hearing the noise, Charlotte and Mrs. Sowerberry come rushing to the rescue, and all three combine forces in subduing little Oliver. He is finally forced into the dust cellar, but he continues showing his dauntless rage by hitting the locked door.

Oliver persists in his defiance, even after Bumble tries to reason with him through the keyhole, and Bumble comes to the conclusion that Oliver's fury is the result of feeding him meat. The board members, who according to him, "are practical philosophers," have prescribed ***gruel***. So, Bumble suggests a period of starvation to restore Oliver to normalcy. After the ***negotiations*** have been reached, Sowerberry returns. Then for no reason he drags out the ***battered*** child and beats him mercilessly. Oliver is then locked up until Mrs. Sowerberry orders him to his bed among the coffins. When he is finally alone, Oliver give way to tears. As soon as it is morning, he opens the door and walks away from the place. He follows a path that takes him past the establishment where he had been kept before being committed to the workhouse. Dick, a child younger than Oliver, who had been his special companion in misery, waits to bid him farewell.



Gruel**:** liquid food.
Negotiations**:** discussions.
Battered**:** beaten and worn out.
Deceitful**:** dishonest
Haven**:** safe place.

CHAPTER 8 TO 13

In the succeeding chapters Oliver would find himself experiencing a new society, much different and more ***deceitful*** than the one he left behind. He manages to get away from the town by noon and on the way, he notices a stone marker showing that he is seventy miles from London. He decides to go to the city where he believes he would find some safe ***haven***. After undergoing many difficulties on the way, Oliver reaches Barnet seven days later. He rests on a doorstep, weary with exhaustion and hunger. Suddenly, he cites a boy observing him. This boy tries to get friendly with Oliver by giving him food and drink. He also offers to help Oliver by introducing him to a kind, old gentleman in London who provides free food and lodging to the

needy people. The boy tells him that his name is Jack Dawkins but is better known as "The Artful Dodger."

Although Oliver is suspicious of Dawkins, he goes with him hoping to win the old gentleman's favour. However, Oliver soon finds himself in an unpleasant dwelling. There, he sees an old repulsive looking man with red hair called Fagin preparing some food. Some other boys are also present who were smoking and drinking like grown men. Oliver takes some food and falls asleep after consuming some warm drink. Jack Dawkins and the other boys are characterised by a ***conspicuous*** adult behaviour and mannerisms. We would soon come to know that it is the world of crime that robbed them of their childhood and innocence.



Conspicuous**:** something that can be easily noticed
Lasciviously**:** greedily
Naive**:** innocent
Diligence**:** carefulness
Erratic**:** unpredictable
Stupefied**:** confused

The next day exhausted Oliver wakes up late. He notices the old Jew, Fagin remove a small box from a secret place in the floor. Fagin was looking at its precious contents ***lasciviously***, and is alarmed to see Oliver watching him. He explains that the box contains his life's savings and tries to divert Oliver's attention. Later, the Dodger comes in with another boy Charley Bates, who tells Fagin they had successfully attended an execution. After breakfast, the duo practice picking pockets from old gentlemen. This is described as a game to the ***naive*** little boy who is delighted. The game is soon interrupted by the entrance of two girls, Betsy and Nancy who were dressed untidily. Fagin tells Oliver to take “The Artful Dodger” as his ideal and gives him his first lesson in picking pockets. This is deliberately done by the old man to introduce Oliver to the world of crime.

Oliver starts living in Fagin's room for many days. He notes that whenever the other boys return empty-handed, they are either denied supper or beaten up. The naive boy believes that it was done for maintaining discipline and ***diligence***. He is soon granted permission to go out with the Dodger and Bates. Outside, he is confused by their ***erratic*** behaviour. At the sight of a gentleman absorbed in reading outside a book stall, they initiate the plan. The Dodger steals the man's handkerchief and passes it to Bates, and the duo run away leaving Oliver alone. Suddenly, Oliver realises what is going on and is ***stupefied*** with fear, he is caught and is hurried to a nearby police office and locked up in a dirty prison cell. Though Oliver is released, he

becomes traumatised by what happened and is taken away by the old gentleman Mr. Brownlow in a coach. Mr. Brownlow brings Oliver to Pentonville residence, and he is immediately put to bed in an unconscious state. After remaining in a state of unconsciousness for many days, he awakens feeling weak with fever. Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper, Mrs. Bedwin takes good care of him and when he feels a little better, he is carried down to her room. There, Oliver sees the portrait of a beautiful lady and is attracted by the divine beauty of the lady's face. Mr. Brownlow comes in and cannot deny the tenderness aroused in him by Oliver's pitiful condition. He begins to wonder as Oliver's features seem very familiar.

Meanwhile Dawkins and Bates who quietly managed to escape goes back to Fagin's quarters. Fagin is enraged at Oliver's absence. All the members feel that Oliver would create trouble for them and so they agree that someone should visit the police office to learn the boy's fate and also whether Oliver has betrayed Fagin and his associates. None of the company is willing to undertake the mission but the arrival of Betsy and Nancy solves their problem. Nancy decides to undertake the risk.

CHAPTER 14 TO 16

The next chapter begins by showing Oliver's disappointment at the removal of the portrait from the wall. According to Mrs. Bedwin, it was done to spare him from tension. The boy feels happy to be living in this changed environment where everything is in a state of peace and order. Mr. Brownlow gifts him with a new suit, and Oliver throws away all his old rags. Then, one evening, Brownlow calls Oliver to his study and requests him to tell everything honestly about his life. Just as Oliver is about to begin, he is interrupted by a visitor, Brownlow's friend Mr. Grimwig who is a garrulous gentleman with an aggressive nature. So, the conversation with Oliver is ***deferred*** until the next day. After his arrival, Grimwig attempts to ***tarnish*** Oliver's image in front of Brownlow. Although Brownlow is convinced about Oliver's innocence, a doubt rises in his mind.



***Deferred*:** postponed.
***Tarnish*:** spoil.

A parcel of books arrives from the stall where Mr. Brownlow was robbed and he is anxious to return some books and to pay his bill. Brownlow

then decides to test Oliver's honesty by sending him on the errand. Grimwig maintains that Oliver, with "a new suit of clothes on his back, a set of valuable books under his arm, and a five-pound note in his pocket," will rejoin the thieves instead of returning. Oliver is expected to be back in twenty minutes, and the two friends wait expectedly gazing at Brownlow's watch. Oliver proceeds toward the book stall. He takes a wrong turn and is halfway down a side street and finds himself lost. Suddenly, Nancy claims that it is her young brother. She starts crying out to people in the vicinity that her younger brother had left home to take up evil ways. Sikes hits Oliver on the head with the books that he was carrying while the bystanders shout their approval. The unconscious boy is then dragged away by the miscreants. Oliver is pushed along between Nancy and Sikes. Seeing Oliver in his respectable attire Fagin and Bates greets him mockingly while The Artful Dodger searches his pockets. Fagin and Sikes quarrel over the five-pound note, which Sikes snatches out of the old man's hands.

Oliver begs to have the books sent back to Mr. Brownlow. When he is told that now he will be considered a thief by his protector, he desperately makes an attempt to escape. At that moment, Nancy closes the door to protect Oliver from the dog trying to bite him. When Fagin starts to beat the recaptured boy, Nancy grabs his club and throws it in the fire. The girl then turns on Fagin with uncontrollable anger. She warns Fagin that if he harms the little boy, she will kill him. Nancy also accused Fagin for destroying her life and making it miserable. When she is about to attack Fagin, Sikes wrenches her wrists and she faints.

Oliver's clothes are taken from him and replaced by the rags that he formerly wore. Fagin remembered seeing the suit in the hands of the dealer who purchased them, thereby gaining a clue to the boy's exact whereabouts. Then, the boy is locked in a room.

CHAPTER 17

In this chapter, Dickens shows the ***undeniable*** interrelationship between tragedy and comedy in everyone's life. In the novel there are flashbacks in time and transitions in place which would help in resolving the



***Undeniable*:** unquestionable

mystery of the protagonist's birth and his parents. This explanation is a way of leading up to a change of scene back to Oliver's birthplace. This transitional chapter serves to preserve a tie between London, the present main scene of action, and the town where Oliver spent his first miserable years.

Mr. Bumble visits Mrs. Mann's place and tells her he is taking two paupers to London to appear in court regarding a settlement. The woman assures Bumble that all of the young ones are well under her care except for the mischievous little Dick. Bumble feeling annoyed, wants to see the disobedient child and the boy is brought in front of him. The boy's health was ***deteriorating*** and Bumble trying to show how kind he was, asked Dick to make a request. To this the innocent child expressed his earnest wish to convey his love and good wishes to his friend, Oliver. Bumble is further irritated and sends off the sick boy to the coal ***cellar*** as punishment.



***Deteriorating*:** weakening.

***Cellar*:** basement.

***Guineas (plural)*:** coin, a form of currency in Britain.

***Lair*:** hideout especially of criminals.

In London, Bumble notices an advertisement given by Mr. Brownlow who promised a reward of five ***guineas*** to any person who would provide information about Oliver Twist. Bumble decides to pay a visit to Pentonville. There, he succeeds in tarnishing the image of Oliver in front of Mr. Brownlow and Grimwig by providing some papers. Mr. Brownlow is deeply hurt by the disclosure and calls Mrs. Bedwin and instructs her never to mention Oliver's name in the house. Thus, in this chapter we see that Bumble's report about Oliver further darkens the boy's prospects.

CHAPTER 18 TO 22

When Oliver returns to the ***lair*** of Fagin, the latter rebukes him for his ingratitude towards those who helped him. He finds the surroundings rather gloomy although the rooms in that house seemed to have a history of elegance that has diminished due to neglect. One afternoon, Bates and Dodger tries to influence his mind and accept the world of crime. Oliver refuses to yield and reminds his companions of their betrayal when they abandoned him to suffer. The duo explains that it was all about surviving in the world. Soon it is decided to end Oliver's confinement, and Fagin attempts to train him by telling him stories of his criminal exploits in a humorous way. This was a ploy to make the world of crime colourful and attractive to the child.

As the narrative progresses Fagin moves outside his lair on a grim, wet night. He is moving towards Sikes' hideout where he also meets Nancy. Fagin is keen to involve Oliver because he believes that once he gets implicated in a crime, he would never escape from the clutches of the criminal world. Nancy is entrusted with the responsibility of bringing Oliver as the thieves will materialise the plan after two days. Next day, Oliver finds a new pair of shoes by his bed and Fagin tells him that he is to be taken to Bill Sikes. Oliver does not question anything but feels curious. Before Fagin leaves, he cautions Oliver to obey Sikes without any question as he is a brutal man. To spend his time, Oliver reads from a book that the old man gave him. The book was about the lives of infamous criminals and was filled with ***gruesome*** descriptions. The boy is shaken by the contents of the book and prays to God to protect him from such a fate.



Gruesome**:** horrible, frightening.

Enveloped by stillness**:** surrounded by quietness.

Wary**:** suspicious.

Nancy comes to take Oliver away and seems upset about something, and Oliver instantly senses that something bad is going to happen. He ponders on the possibility of asking for people's help on the streets. Nancy, realising his intentions tells him that nothing could be done as she had already tried whatever was possible and failed. She further tells him that both of them will be in danger if he attempts to escape. He is then taken to Sikes' hideout where he is filled with fear and terror. By his gestures, Sikes warns that he will shoot Oliver in the head if he tries to communicate with anyone while they are out together. Nancy translates the robber's threats into plain words. That night Bill and Oliver sleep while Nancy sits up. Before he goes to sleep and later the next morning, Oliver looks for encouragement from the girl, but she shows absolute indifference. Nancy awakens them, the next morning and they leave their dwelling.

When Sikes and Oliver walked out, it is raining and the city is ***enveloped by stillness***. They move towards through the western part of London, and continue the journey on a cart. Oliver is periodically threatened by Sikes as the latter was ***wary*** of the boy. Soon they leave the cart and loiter through the field of Hampton until they finally enter the town. They have dinner in an old public house and then moves to Sheppherton. Finally they reach the destination- an old decrepit house near a flowing stream. There

they are joined by Barney and Toby Crackit.

At half past one, the burglars cross a bridge in the darkness of the night, and approach the targeted house. Oliver realising what is going to happen is filled with grief and horror. He begs Sikes to let him go but is silenced at the sight of the pistol. Sikes expertly removes the safety bars from a window in the back of the house, and instructs Oliver to go through the passage and unlock the door for them. The boy decides that once he is inside he would raise an alarm. But as Sikes was lifting him to the window, two persons arrive and shouts at them. A gunshot is heard and Oliver is hit by the bullet. The burglars flee, dragging the bleeding boy with them. Here it is interesting to note that much of the actions in the novel unfolds in the darkness of the end. This is used to highlight the perils faced by the protagonist.

CHAPTERS 23 to 27

In Chapter 23 we see the growing closeness between Mrs. Corney, the matron of an establishment for paupers and Bumble. Bumble sees the utility of getting payments from Mrs Corney. As the two were engaged in an intimate conversation, they are rudely disturbed by an old pauper who announces that old Sally who is near her death wish.

In the garret room, Mrs. Corney finds the old inmate in an unconscious state. The impatient matron is just about to leave when the sick woman sits up and asks the other two persons to leave the room. The patient who was in her last stage tells her incoherent story: In this same room years ago, she nursed a beautiful young lady who gave birth to a child and died immediately. But before dying, the mother entrusted a gold object to her attendant. However, the narrator confesses, she stole the object, although she realised that the boy would have been better treated. In her final moments, the girl expressed the hope that if her child survived it might one day have reason not to be ashamed of its mother. Sally tells Mrs. Corney that the child's name is Oliver and breathes her last before being able to disclose anything further. This adds to the mystery of the origins of the parish boy.

Meanwhile, in another scene, Fagin is sitting thinking about something while Dawkins, Bates, and Chitling play cards.The others tease Chitling

about being in love with Betsy. Tom asserts that he served a jail sentence to protect the girl. The gang members humour each other. This is when the bell rings and the Dodger goes out to investigate. When he comes back, he whispers something to Fagin, who immediately instructs Bates and Chitling from the room. It was Toby Crackit - ***famished***, weary and alone. Fagin had already read about the failure of the burglary attempt in the newspapers. After Toby has eaten, Fagin questions him about Sikes and Oliver and is dumbfounded to hear that Toby is also ignorant of the whereabouts of Bill and Oliver. Crackit explains that the vicinity of the countryside was on a state of ***vigil***. It was therefore possible that Sikes has dumped and left the wounded Oliver in a ditch and left. Fagin immediately rush out of the room in rage and goes straight ot Saffron Hill. At the Three Cripples, the Saffron Hill public house, he enters a crowded room enveloped in smoke and signals the landlord. The landlord tells him that he has heard nothing of Barney. Then Fagin inquires about a man called Monks, and the landlord states that he might arrive tomorrow. To this Fagin looks somewhat worried and tells him he will meet Monks tomorrow.



***Famished*:** starving

***Vigil*:** at guard, watching cautiously

***Ill-contrived*:** badly planned

Next, Fagin goes to Bill Sikes' hideout, where he finds Nancy by herself in a state of deep despondency. She cannot offer Fagin any comfort. Provided Sikes escapes unharmed, she prefers that Oliver should be dead and thus out of Fagin's clutches. Fagin becomes angry and alludes to his power of putting the noose around Sikes's neck. He is irritated at the thought of losing the boy, who represents an investment and potential source of profit. And in his agitation he almost blurts out something involuntarily, but checks himself, thinking he has unwittingly disclosed something important. But Nancy was too drunk to have heard anything.

As Fagin returns to his lair, he is interrupted on the way by a stranger whose voice he recognises. He takes this mysterious man in a room alone to prevent the others from overhearing them. The mysterious man is none other than Monks. Initially they speak in small voices but Monks shouts at Fagin that the entire plan was ***ill-contrived***. They are discussing about Oliver. Monks remarks that Fagin could have made a thief of him easily and tarnished his reputation with the possible punishment sentence of transportation for



***Spectre*:** ghost.

***Tinker*:** a person who does small errands or collects left away things.

life. Fagin protests that he has done all that he could, and if the boy is still alive he is trapped. These chapters are filled with an air of deepening mystery as the plot becomes more intricate with the introduction of Monks. We come to know that whatever hardships Oliver faces is a part of a plan to bring about his downfall.

Although Monks apparently has an upper hand over Fagin, he is essentially a coward. This is seen when he sees a shadow outside and believes it to be a woman's ***spectre***. It is also possible that Monks is haunted by some guilt connected to his past. Fagin searches through the rooms and find nothing. Then the two leave the room.

The narrative scene then changes to Mr. Bumble, and we find him still waiting in Mrs. Corney's room. He takes a good look at the widow's property. Since no one is around, he surveys around and finds a locked box that is filled with money. He decides that Mrs. Corney would make a suitable wife and proposes to her. Mrs. Corney accepts him and tells him that Sally is dead. She further says that she will tell him everything after they are married. Here we see that Bumble has found a suitable life mate in Mrs. Corney who seems unaffected by his obvious greed for money and unscrupulous nature. This chapter concludes the events of Chapters 23 and 24 and continues in an unbroken time-sequence.

CHAPTERS 28 TO 32

The narrative in the next chapters goes on to pick up the adversities faced by the protagonist after the failed burglary attempt. It is revealed that it was Toby Crackit who first suggested abandoning the boy. Finding no other alternative, Sikes drops the boy and disappears over a hedge. Simultaneously, the pursuers lose the chase and turn back. The group consists of Mr. Giles, the butler and steward of the old lady residing in the mansion, Brittles, a general handyman, and a ***tinker*** with his two dogs.

When it is morning, the air becomes colder and the drizzle continues. Oliver lies in an unconscious state, and his left arm is bleeding due to the gun shot. Soon he recovers consciousness and struggles to his feet. In a semi-conscious state, the boy crawls painfully across the fields and manages

to reach the nearest house. As he gets close, Oliver recognises it is the same residence that they attempted to rob the previous night. He has no choice left and so he knocks the door alarming the residents inside. The helpless boy is dragged into the house and news of the capture is shouted up the stairs. The voice of a young girl conveys her aunt's wishes to have the wounded robber brought to Giles's room and be given medical attention. Brittles is sent off to bring a constable and doctor from Chertsey. The old lady of the house, Mrs. Maylie, and her niece Rose are having breakfast when Mr. Losberne, the surgeon from Chertsey, arrives. He seems to be an amiable and humorous man who goes inside to check the robber. We come to know that Giles has suppressed the information that the victim of his bullet is a young boy, and neither of the ladies has seen the housebreaker. The doctor thinks that the ladies of the house should go with him to see the patient, and they agree. When the ladies see that it is just a child fast asleep with pain and exhaustion, they are filled with pity for him. Rose sheds tears and requests that the boy be saved. Her aunt Mrs. Maylie too declares that she intends to take the suffering boy under her protection and appeals to the doctor for help. He volunteers to get the assistance from Giles and Brittles. Mr. Losberne asserts that the boy would soon become conscious and then they will talk to him to understand the boy's nature better. Oliver revives in the evening and instantly expresses his wish to speak. Accordingly, the boy tells his protectors everything he had to face in his life and sleeps calmly after his confession is made. Consequently the people around him decide to protect him in whatever way it is possible. Mr. Losberne cheerfully goes against the respected standards of conventional morality and order. In this he is supported by the Mrs. Maylie and her Rose. The doctor invents a bold story to trick the police, even to the extent of compromising his own professional integrity. He also tricks the trust-worthy servants into supporting him. Although it was against the tenets of law, all of this is in accord with Dickens's principles concerning justice. Dickens has little confidence in institutions, including the law, to bring about human betterment. He has more faith in the ability of the generosity of worthy people as an agency of bringing true justice than in the impersonal doings of legal machinery. Here he

emphasises on the significance of mercy and charity above the workings of formally instructed legal codes.

In the meantime, Oliver's arm starts healing and he begins to recover from illness. He is determined to convince Rose Maylie of his gratitude and expresses his wish to show his sincerity. Rose promises that he will have ample opportunity, for her aunt intends to take Oliver to the countryside with them. Oliver also begins pondering about Mr.Brownlow and Mrs. Bedwin, the people who formerly cared for him when he was in a terrible state. To this Mr. Losberne offers to take him to see Mr. Brownlow.When Oliver has partially regained his strength, he and the doctor take Mrs. Maylie's carriage for a trip to London. As they come to Chertsey Bridge, Oliver becomes suddenly becomes tensed and points out the hideout of the robbers. The doctor at once jumps out of the vehicle and invades the building. But there he finds only an old hunchback. Inside nothing corresponds with Oliver's descriptions of the place. During this confrontation between the doctor and the hunch-back, the latter claims that he has been living there alone for twenty-five years. The doctor gives him a coin and leaves. In the carriage, Mr. Losberne feels doubtful of Oliver's truthfulness but dismisses them and reproaches himself for the habit of yielding to impulses. Here we see a difference between Mr. Losberne and Mr. Brownlow. Unlike the former, the latter easily accepted everything he saw or heard. Unfortunately when they stop before Mr. Brownlow's residence, they find a "For Rent" sign in the window. From the neighbours they discover that Brownlow had sold everything and left for the West Indies with his housekeeper and a friend six weeks ago. Oliver also urges a visit to the bookstall, but the doctor cancels it. Oliver is grievously disappointed at losing a chance of letting Mr. Brownlow and Mrs. Bedwin know of his well-being and of regaining their trust. He continues, however, in the good graces of his present benefactors. Leaving Giles and another servant in the Chertsey house, Mrs. Maylie and Rose take Oliver with them to a distant cottage.

It is springtime in the country, and the boy finds himself in a vivid and new world. This is because he has passed the past years of his life living in grimy and ugly surroundings, and now the natural beauty of the place

corresponded to his inner peace and satisfaction. The days are peaceful and happy, and the nights free from worry and insecurity. There, he is taught to read and write by an old gentleman and Oliver cheerfully prepares his daily lessons. He now finds occasions to perform acts of kindness and provide services to the two ladies, in whose company he spends three idyllic months.

CHAPTERS 33-38

In the next chapters we are introduced to a new character of Henry Maslie. These chapters forms a minor plot concerning Rose and Henry's relationship. One warm evening, after Oliver and the ladies have returned from their regular walk, Rose all of a sudden begins crying uncontrollably. She excuses herself saying that she is unwell and goes to her room. It seems clear that she has lied but still Mrs. Maylie feels certain that her niece's condition is serious and will become worse and she tries to control herself. As feared by Mrs. Maylie, the very next morning, Rose is bed-ridden due to a high fever. At once Mrs. Maylie writes two letters; one to Mr. Losberne from Chertsey, and the other addressed to Harry Maylie.

Oliver takes the Losberne letter and speeds four miles through the fields to the nearest village. At the inn, the message to the doctor is entrusted to a special express rider. As Oliver hurries away, he accidentally collides with a tall man wearing a cloak. The stranger yells at the boy and then falls down in a fit. Oliver calls for help, and the man is carried into the inn. The distress at the cottage caused by Rose's illness drives the incident from Oliver's mind.

Rose is much worse, and the local doctor has given her up. The girl becomes delirious because of the fever and Oliver spends the night in terror. The following day the family spend a day waiting sadly, praying for her recovery. Oliver too sits in the local graveyard and prays for Rose. It seems incredible that one so young and good should die while on all sides vibrant life thrives under the sunny sky. But the paradox is confirmed by the sound of the church bell tolling for the funeral of some other young person. The sad boy returns home and joins Mrs. Maylie near the bedside of the ailing

girl. The patient is in a deep slumber that everyone believes will end either in death or complete recovery. After many hours have passsed, Losberne enters to announce that Rose will survive.

Oliver goes outdoors and relieves the strain of anxiety with a flood of tears. A post-chaise comes up the road at full speed. The horses are stopped and Giles bellows out of the window at Oliver for news. The boy convinces him and the other passenger that is Mrs. Maylie's son Harry, that Rose is out of danger. As he greets his mother, Harry chides her for not writing sooner. The old lady had not sent her letter to him until Mr. Losberne had stated his opinion. Harry now tells his mother about his deep and resolute love for Rose. To this Mrs. Maylie responds by expressing her belief that even the most devoted attachment is subjected to social scrutiny. This can occur if the wife, even though innocent, has a doubtful past. This has no effect on Harry who ignores such notions and promises that he will declare his feelings to Rose within two days. Then the old lady reminds him that Rose may refuse him on account of her doubtful birth.

Mr. Losberne teases Giles a bit in his characteristic manner and then takes the butler aside to confide to him that Mrs. Maylie had deposited twenty-five pounds in a bank for him in recognition of his brave conduct on the night the robbery was foiled. The entire household pass the evening in a spirit of good-natured gratitude and joy. Oliver is relieved to find peace and happiness return to the life of his close friends. He is no longer alone on his morning excursions but is accompanied by Harry, who enthusiastically gathers flowers for Rose.

Being left more to himself now, Oliver begins to concentrate in his education and study diligently. One evening, after an active day, he falls asleep and dreams that he is in Fagin's house again. In the dream, Fagin points at Oliver, and shows him to another man. The other man speaks words of extreme hatred and Oliver wakes up in a fright. In reality Oliver finds that Fagin was standing beside the ground floor window with the man Oliver had encountered in the inn yard. They instantly recognise each other and the sinister pair moves away when Oliver calls for help. Harry Maylie

responds to Oliver's alarm and crosses the hedge to run after the intruders. Giles and Mr. Losberne also join the chase but the fugitives cannot be seen, and there is no trace of their movements. The night fall forces abandonment of the search and Giles makes a futile final attempt in the village to pick up clues about the men. He continues with his efforts even in the following days but nothing comes up and so he lose interest in the incident.

Rose quickly regains her health and resumes her place in the family life. Still there is a quality of tension in the atmosphere. Harry and his mother have long private sessions. Rose frequently appears to have been crying, and her uneasiness increases after Mr. Losberne sets the day for his departure. Finally, Harry Maylie decides to declare his love for her openly. Her first reaction is to wish that he had left sooner to find some work worthy of his abilities. Harry tells her that all he has ever wanted was to win her love but Rose is firm in her decision and she tells Harry that he must stop thinking about her as his beloved. When asked for reasons, Rose raises the objections of her unsuitability to be the wife of a man who aspires to rise in the world. She admits that she has made the decision rationally and not emotionally. Rose also asserts that if Harry were not so far above her in station and prospects, things would be different. Before they part, he convinces Rose to allow him to propose to her again within a year's time or less. While Losberne, Harry Maylie, and Oliver are at breakfast, the doctor scolds Harry for repeatedly changing his plans. The young man has at last made up his mind to leave with the doctor without seeing the ladies that morning.

Harry privately tells Oliver that since he will not be at home for a while, Oliver must write to him about every two weeks, addressed to the general post office in London. This is for the safety of the two women. Harry wants to know how his mother and Rose are, but he wishes to keep his location secret and the boy feels proud that he has been finally been trusted and given a major responsibility. Before leaving Harry looks at Rose's window and gets into the carriage, and moves off with great speed. Rose cries as she watches from behind the curtains.

Meanwhile, we come to know that has married Mrs. Corney and succeeded to the post of master, but in spite of his elevation, he sorely

misses his cocked hat and his social position. Earlier he commanded respect as a figure of authority and now he was idle. Bumble and the widow have been married for eight weeks. Going over the terms of his marriage dowry, he mutters that he sold himself too cheap. Mrs. Bumble did not catch all of his words but guesses at their meaning and starts quarrelling with him. Bumble meets the challenge by employing the forceful gaze that never fails to stop hungry paupers but his rebellious wife laughs at him and exercises her next weapon, that is tears. This tactic only entertains Bumble and feeling victorious he walks towards the door. Mrs. Bumble now resorts to more persuasive methods. She knocks her lord's hat off, grasps him by the throat, and begins to pound him with her fists. After a bit of scratching and hair pulling, she pushes him over a chair and orders the fallen warrior from the room. He picks up his ineffectual hat and retires from the field.

Bumble makes a tour of the workhouse. He enters the room where female inmates are laundering and tries to improve his damaged spirits by reprimanding them for talking too loudly. The strict disciplinarian is promptly cowed by the unexpected presence of Mrs. Bumble. To the delight of the pauper women, the workhouse master is threatened by his wife. Feeing humiliated, Bumble goes outside visits a pub. Inside there is only one other customer, a tall, dark person wearing a cloak, and the two begin a conversation. The stranger stresses that his identity is to remain secret, but he reveals that he knows something of Bumble's history. The dark man seeks information from Bumble and makes an advance payment. The inquirer directs Bumble to recall an event of twelve years ago. It becomes clear to the reader that the stranger is referring to the birth of Oliver Twist, but he savagely denies interest in the boy. The woman who nursed the mother is the object of his investigation. When informed that the woman is dead, the man appears both relieved and disappointed. Then, saying that the matter is of no importance, he is about to leave. Bumble's greed instinct senses that it could be profitable to know more about Oliver's history. His wife has never told him about what took place on the night of Sally's death, but he has learned that it concerned Oliver's mother who died in childbirth. So Bumble detains the stranger with the information that he can produce a witness to the old pauper's death. The

man's apprehension seems to be revived by this confidence, and he arranges an evening meeting for the next day and he leaves without saying anything. Bumble notices that he did not write down his name. Overtaking the man, Bumble is curtly told that he is Monks.

The next evening, Mr. and Mrs. Bumble walk down to the riverside. The structures in the vicinity are all neglected dwellings. Bumble leads the way to a large building which was once a factory of some sort but is now crumbling. As the man and woman pause in front of the ruins, a rainstorm begins. Monks calls them inside. As the thunder strikes, Monks is strangely disturbed by the sound. He leads the way to an upper floor and then turns to Bumble asking what does the woman know. But the dauntless matron earlier warned her husband to say as little as possible, and she assumes the role of spokesman. She has never confided in her husband about the business in hand. It becomes obvious that Monks is willing to pay well for information related to Sally's death. Mrs. Bumble negotiates cunningly until Monks agrees with her price of twenty-five pounds. Speaking in a whisper, the woman relates her story. She assures Monks that she was entirely alone with Sally when she died. Mrs. Bumble removed from the corpse's hand a scrap of paper that turned out to be a pawnbroker's ticket. Sally had pawned the object that she got from Oliver's mother, managing to keep up the interest payments. There was time enough for the matron to redeem the pledge, and she did so. Mrs. Bumble now produces a small bag, which Monks eagerly opens. It contains a little locket holding two locks of hair, and a plain gold wedding-ring. The ring has the inscription "Agnes," with a blank for the last name, also a date within the year before Oliver's birth. Monks allows Mrs. Bumble to ask two questions, without committing himself to answer. She first asks if it is the only information he needs, and secondly will it prove anything against her. To this Monks replies affirmatively to the first question and answers in negative to the second. He then pulls open a trap door at Bumble's feet, exposing the turbulent river below. He ties a weight and drops it into the surging waters. Monks warns the married pair to secrecy, to which Bumble agrees. The couple then gladly obey Monks's command to leave in haste.

CHAPTERS 39 TO 46

After the description of Monks' meeting with the Bumbles, the narrative takes us to the present hideout of Sikes. It is a slum near his former home, and there he is in a ferocious state because of ill-health brought about by extreme poverty. Nancy is in his company, and she looks pale and haggard. Even in such a condition, he abused her, and she protests at the treatment she receives. She tells him that unfair treatment is being meted out to her and falls unconscious out of weariness. At that moment, Fagin arrives with the Dodger and Charley Bates. They try to revive Nancy, and shows that they have brought ample provisions, food and drink for the two of them. Nevertheless, Sikes snaps at them for having neglected him during three weeks of sickness. Fagin defends himself claiming he has been out of town for a week and it prevented from coming during the rest of the time. Sikes makes a demand of five pounds but is obliged to settle for less. He tells Nancy to deliver the money as he trusts none, and so the four comprising of Fagin and his apprentices leave Sikes alone. Once they reach Fagin's lair, the old man tells the boys to leave.

As Fagin is about to get the money for Sikes, he hears a voice. Unobserved by the old man, Nancy snatches off her shawl and bonnet and shoves them under the table. Fagin remarks that it is a man whom he has been expecting, that is Monks. Nancy looks nervous and does not move from the table, so Fagin takes his visitor to another part of the house. The instant they leave, Nancy goes to the door and then also climbs the stairs. Fifteen minutes later, she comes back. When Fagin re-enters the room alone, the girl is apparently ready to be off, and he gives her the money.

Nancy is highly distraught. Outside, she first starts in a direction opposite from the way to Sikes' place. Then, in tears, she turns back and hastens to Sikes with the money.

The next day, Sikes does not notice Nancy's agitated state. But in the evening, he comments on her strange appearance, finally concluding that she is getting the fever. When Sikes asks for his medicine, Nancy turns her back to pour the contents and gives it to Sikes. Soon he falls in a sound

sleep as Nancy notes that the opium has taken effect. She quickly gets ready, kisses him and rush outside. It is almost ten as the girl hastily moves through the streets of London streets and finally reaches her destination - a family hotel in Hyde Park. Once inside, she requests to see Rose Maylie but is prevented by the servants. After some delay, Nancy sends a message to Rose, begging to meet her at once. Rose responds by having the bedraggled girl shown upstairs to wait in another room. When the two girls meet, Nancy is moved by Rose's kindness and confesses that it was she who ambushed Oliver, and at the same time told Rose of her disreputable life. Nancy further states that she would surely be murdered if her present action is known. Then Nancy asks Rose if she is familiar witha person called Monks, to which Nancy replies in negative. Nancy explains that she learned of Rose's location by overhearing it from the man who calls himself Monks. She tells about the way she eavesdropped on Fagin and Monks' conversation and heard that the latter is willing to pay a large a sum if Oliver is recovered and is destroyed by implicating him in the world of crime. Monks preferred to have the boy suffer all of the indignities of imprisonment and worse. Monks announced his determination relentlessly to persecute the butt of his hatred - his brother Oliver. Nancy also heard Monks mention that Mrs. Maylie and her niece would give a fortune to know who Oliver is. Then Nancy announces that she must be on her way.

Rose worried by this new information, asks how Oliver can be saved. To this Nancy suggests her to seek the advice of some trustworthy gentleman. As the girl was about to depart, Rose offers her protection and assistance but Nancy rejects the offer claiming that it is too late for her to turn back to a better life. She is fully aware that Sikes is a violent criminal who may yet kill her, but he is the only person who ever filled the void in her existence. In case she is needed, Nancy promises to be on London Bridge every Sunday night for an hour before midnight. There she will meet Rose and whomever the latter chooses to take into her confidence.

Rose and her aunt would be in the city for two more days and she is confused wondering whom she can entrust Nancy's information. Initially she thinks about numerous persons known to her, and wonders if she can

confide to Harry but she hesitates from doing so. This is partly a reaction to what had earlier passed between the two. She is soon interrupted by Oliver who reports that as he was out walking with Giles, he saw Mr. Brownlow enter a house. Giles learned that it was the gentleman's house and secured the address. Rose believes the problem has been solved and immediately determines to take Oliver to Brownlow.

At first she goes inside alone to see Brownlow and finds him with Grimwig. When she announces that she has knowledge of Oliver Twist, Grimwig looks highly displeased. Brownlow eagerly listens to Rose's report of all that has happened to Oliver since the gentlemen last saw him. Then, she tells him that the little boy was waiting outside. The old gentleman rush out of the house into the coach and brings the boy into the room, and Grimwig greets him cordially. Mrs. Bedwin is overjoyed to see Oliver and the reunion is a moving one. Rose privately informs Brownlow about Nancy's disclosures and he immediately volunteers to tell Mr. Losberne that evening and also advises her to inform about the situation to Mrs. Maylie.

When the doctor learns of the developments, he becomes characteristically carried away with indignation. Brownlow pacifies him and argues the advantages of discretion. He tells him that arresting the gang will not benefit Oliver in any way. It is more important for them to trap the mysterious man called Monks alone. In order to find out from Nancy how they can get to him, it is necessary to wait calmly until next Sunday. Brownlow recommends that Oliver should not be informed about these events as it will disturb the child. Brownlow's proposals are accepted and he requests that Grimwig be admitted to their proceedings. To this Mr. Losberne agrees on the condition that Harry Maylie must also be included. With these provisions settled, Brownlow ends the meeting by telling of his wish to remain silent for a time about his abrupt departure from the country.

Meanwhile we are told that Noah and Charlotte are on the run after robbing the Sowerberries and the two fugitives go to a seedy part of London, and Noak stops at the Three Cripples. They are received by Barney, who serves them in a room behind the bar. On being warned by Barney, Fagin takes a position at a secret observation post and watches the newcomers,

listening to Noah's absurd bragging. Noah assures Charlotte that he intends to prosper by engaging in theft and announces his ambition to become associated with some gang. That might help them to dispose of the twenty-pound note that Charlotte is carrying. Fagin makes his entrance after hearing his words. After friendly preliminaries, Fagin intimidates Noah by exactly repeating some of his words. The cowardly Noah accuses Charlotte of being the guilty party. But Fagin dismisses all of this, confiding that he is also in that kind of business, and that Noah might be interested. While Fagin offers to exert his influence to get Noah connected with a prominent person, he claims that it will cost the twenty pounds after which Noah can see the man tomorrow. Noah accepts the offer, partly because he is uncomfortably aware that he is in Fagin's power.

Noah observes that Charlotte is good at what she does and will be productive. As for himself, Noah would like assignments involving a minimum of effort and risk. He comes to know that the person he was supposed to meet was Fagin himself. After some deliberation, Fagin hits upon the ideal work for the new comer. He is assigned the task of stealing coins from young children sent on errands and then knocking them into the gutter. Noah is content with these arrangements and identifies himself and his partner as Mr. and Mrs. Morris Bolter. The next day, Noah, alias Bolter, learns that Fagin is the same man to whom he offered to recommend Oliver. Fagin delivers a persuasive lecture on the necessity in the business of each looking out for the others. To emphasise his argument, Fagin expresses sorrow that he lost one of his best members the previous day that is the expert Artful Dodger, who is accused of picking a pocket.

Charley Bates comes in looking strangely saddened. He explains that there are witnesses against Dawkins and he will surely be transported to the colonies on the charge of theft of a snuff box. Fagin tries to cheer Bated by supposing that the Dodger will put on a creditable performance at his trial. Fagin wants someone to report on Dawkins, and Bolter is given the duty to do so in spite his protests. He is dressed as a wagon driver and taken to the police station by Bates. Noah makes his way to the station and immediately recognises Dawkins when he is brought in to appear. The

Dodger impudently tries to make a mockery of the hearing, but a witness testifies against him and he is formally charged. He is sent to the prison, and Noah rejoins Bates to deliver the information to Fagin.

The hasty migration of Noah and Charlotte to London forms another connecting link between Oliver's starting point and the city. The plot is developing fast and Dickens gives specific time references to indicate this. One day after Monks transacted his business with the Bumbles, he consulted with Fagin.

Noah contributes more confirmation of his character. It is obvious that he allowed Charlotte to carry the loot so that if necessary, he could blame her to save himself. On the other hand, there is irony in the way Noah categorizes himself as a snoop and a coward. Here we are repeatedly shown the double dealings of the criminals and their absence of values. For them, violent death, arrest, imprisonment, and execution are part of the normal patterns of existence. Because Fagin and Sikes trust Nancy, she is well informed regarding their crimes. In spite of her grudge against Fagin, she is unwillingly to be a part of his crimes. In her conversation with Rose, Nancy said nothing that could injure Sikes. Still, she is worried and distracted that she has betrayed her friends.

Fagin and his gang members have no new plans to work, so on Sunday night they are idle while Nancy is frightened. After eleven o'clock has struck, Nancy attempts casually to leave the room but Sikes forbids her to go out. The girl becomes desperate and hysterical. Sikes detains her forcibly in another room until midnight, when she ceases to struggle.

The two men discuss about Nancy's strange behaviour until she re-enters the room. She is apparently subdued, so Sikes directs her to guide Fagin down the stairs as it is dark. Fagin whispers to her that if Sikes behaves like a brute with her, she can turn to him for protection and he asserts that he has the willpower to destroy the man whom he hates. On his way back, Fagin ponders about the sudden change in Nancy. He comes to the assumption that the girl has become tired of Sikes and has possibly formed an attachment with someone else. The old man believes it would be profitable to have that man in his gang. He was already against Sikes and his

dominating behaviour. So in the evening, he tells Nancy must know that if she takes up another man, none of them would ever be safe from the brute savagery of Sikes. So Fagin conceives a plot of killing Sikes with the help of Nancy. At their parting, she had betrayed no emotion at Fagin's hint that Sikes might be eliminated. As he walks away, the cunning old man plans to spy upon Nancy in order to find out about the new man in her life and where he lives. Once he knows the whole truth, Fagin can force her to help him murder Sikes.

The next morning, Fagin assigns Noah the task of spying on Nancy and to provide him with full information about her activities. For six nights Noah stands by in his disguise but receives no further instruction. But on Sunday, Fagin tells his agent that his target will surely go out, for her oppressor will be gone all night. Fagin conducts Noah to the Three Cripples. Nancy is in the little room where the old man first saw Sowerberry's late companions. Barney disturbs the girl so that Noah can get a good look at her through the secret pane. When Nancy leaves, the cunning spy keeps her in sight. Nancy reaches London Bridge shortly before midnight and she crosses to the opposite side of the river with Noah constantly behind her back. She returns to the centre of the structure and stands there. Immediately after midnight, Rose arrives, accompanied by Brownlow. Nancy prevents them from speaking just as a figure in rustic dress (Noah) brushes past them. Nancy suggests that they move down some steps at the south end of the bridge, where it will be safer to talk. Aware of Nancy's intentions, Noah hastens on ahead and descends the stairs. The others come and stop short of the spy's place of concealment. Brownlow dislikes Nancy's arrangements, but she says in defence that she was afraid to speak in the open. Nancy explains why she was unable to go out last Sunday and confesses that she had to drug Sikes in order to see Rose the first time. Brownlow tells Nancy that he wants the opportunity to force Monks to reveal Oliver's secret. If this plan of attack fails, the old gentleman requests for Nancy's aid in trapping Fagin. But the girl strongly refuses to betray any of those who have trusted and stood by her, causing Brownlow and Miss Maylie to promise that Fagin will not be punished without Nancy's consent if she will cooperate in overpowering

Monks. The girl agrees on the condition that Monks does not learn who the informer is.

Nancy details the location of the Three Cripples and points out how Monks can best be observed. Then she gives a description of the man. When she is about to mention that his neckerchief covers something, Brownlow interrupts by describing the body marks before Nancy even completes. The old man tries to pass off his unintentional remarks with indifference, but Noah hears him tell himself that it must be the man he knows. After Nancy finishes giving her information, Brownlow assures her that she can be conveyed to some place in England or in a foreign land, completely beyond the reach of her old companions. But Nancy cannot be changed from her conviction that it is too late for her to look forward to anything but death. Again she refuses money, but asks instead for some personal trifle of Rose and the latter gives her a handkerchief. After Rose and Mr. Brownlow's departure, Nancy reclines on the cold steps and cries. But after sometime she climbs to the streets. Through the character of Nancy, Dickens represents his belief that human nature is basically good. In spite of her awful circumstances, she cannot take part in injuring Oliver, but neither will she turn against the amoral criminals who have placed their faith in her. The dilemma that she suffers from essentially shows that her soul is pure and she has a conscience.

CHAPTERS 47 TO 50

It is two hours before dawn when Fagin sits up, filled with fury after he has learned what happened. Sikes comes in and offers a share of the money he acquired the previous night. He is scared to see Fagin in a state of maniacal anger. Fagin announces that he has some serious matters to discuss. Then he asks Sikes what should one do if the sleeping Noah who is in possession of all their dark secrets, exposes them to danger. Sikes in anger at once remarks that the punishment would be death. Then Fagin further increases Sikes's temper by supposing someone in their group had betrayed them. He awakens Noah and orders him to relate his account of Nancy's secret dealings. When Noah reveals that Nancy drugged Sikes in

order to see Rose the first time, Sikes rushes for the door but is unable to get it open immediately. Fagin recovers some of his remarkable self-possession and pleads with Sikes to be calm down as it is for their own safety. Fagin unlocks the door and Sikes mad with rage goes out in search of Nancy. Without hesitation, Sikes charges home and quietly enters his room. He double-locks and blocks the door. When Nancy wakes up, she is pleased to see him back but instantly detects that something is wrong. Suddenly, he violently drags her into the middle of the room and tells her that he knows the truth about she has been doing of late. The frightened girl struggles hard and pleads to spare her. In her wild pleas, she promises Sikes that she will speak to Brownlow so that they can start a new life in some far-away place. She also repeats what Rose had earlier told her, that it is never late to repent. This angers Sikes more and he hits her with his pistol, knocking her down. The bleeding Nancy struggles to her knees raising her hands for mercy. Shutting his eyes from the damage he has done to Nancy, Sikes takes up a club and delivers the final blow on her head that kills her.

The next morning, Sikes is described as sitting in the scene of crime. He is shaken by his own misdeed and so he destroys the instrument used in the crime and removes the bloodstains from his clothing. At last, he backs out of the door, locks it, and leaves the house with his dog. Sikes retreats to the northern part of London towards a rural area. There he loiters around purposelessly. Soon he comes across a small pub in the village of Hatfield and enters for a meal. The local patrons are busy chatting when they are interrupted by the entrance of a vendor. The vendor is marketing the merits of a preparation specially made to remove any kind of stain. He snatches Sikes's hat to use for a practical demonstration, because it has the spatters of Nancy's blood on it. This at once pricked Sikes and he left the premises at once with the hat.

At the post office, Sikes walks around the stagecoach from London and overhears some talk about a murder in Spitalfields. But the chatting is broken off when the coach leaves. The tormented Sikes then turns toward St. Albans but is tortured by a vision of Nancy's spirit that is always behind

him and that he cannot in any way shake off. Filled with absolute horror, Sikes forces himself to enter a dark shed to sleep. But now he is haunted by a vision of his victim's eyes. As the night falls the sounds of distant cries can be heard and Sikes runs in the direction of the voices. A great fire is in progress. His conscience was filled with guilt for having killed Nancy and so he welcomes the opportunity for distraction and human company. He works furiously all through the night, with reckless disregard for his own safety, helping to combat the fire. After the relief of having something to distract him, the agonies of his conscience return again to torment him. As he shares some food with the fire fighters, he hears that he is being sought in the countryside. At that, Sikes decides that his best chance is to return to London, extort some money from Fagin, and leave for France.

Sikes realises he could be given away by his dog because descriptions circulated are likely to mention the animal. Sikes, therefore, decides to drown his companion and ties a heavy stone in his handkerchief. The canine sensing danger comes to his master unwillingly. As Sikes tries to put the noose around his pet's neck, the beast jumps back and runs off. After waiting some time for the dog to return, Sikes goes on by himself. At the end of Chapter 48, Sikes is in an ironic position. After having murdered mercilessly the one person who loved him unconditionally, he is unsuccessful in the attempt to kill his dog which he fears may be a threat to his own existence.

At twilight, Mr. Brownlow gets out of a coach at his door along with two men who invites a fourth passenger into the house. The reluctant member of the group is Monks. Brownlow gives him the final choice of either cooperating or being turned to be dealt with by the law after being charged with fraud and robbery. Monks finds himself completely overpowered and asks if there is any other recourse. Brownlow sternly replies that there are no other alternatives, nor time for deliberation. Monks enters the room, and his host instructs the guards to lock the door from the outside and to wait until he rings for them. Here we come to know from the conversation between Monks and Mr. Brownlow that the latter was an old friend of Monks' father. To

this the old gentleman replies that it is for the sake of that friendship that he has been spared. It is further disclosed that when Mr. Brownlow was young, he was engaged to be married to Monks' paternal aunt but she died leaving him heartbroken. Mr. Brownlow remained closely attached to the brother of his lost fiancée till his death. Mr. Brownlow, then calls Monks by his real name, that is Edward Leeford.

Interrupted by occasional complaints and weak denials from Monks, Mr. Brownlow spells out the past history of the present problems. Brownlow's friend, when only a boy, was forced into an unwanted marriage as per the wishes of his family. Consequently, Monks was born but still the couple grew distant from each other because of their mutual indifference and hatred leading to their separation. The woman went to the continent and forgot her immature husband, who was ten years younger than herself. When he had matured enough acquired new connections. Fifteen years ago, Brownlow's friend became friendly with a retired naval officer who was alone with two daughters, the youngest one only two or three years of age. The elder child was a beautiful girl of nineteen who attracted the attention of Mr. Leeford. And within a year, she and Monks's father were engaged. The man inherited money from a relative who died in Rome, making it necessary for him to go there immediately. However he went there never to return alive again. When Monks's mother learned of this in Paris, she decided to take her son to her estranged husband. The day after she arrived, he died. As there was written will, so legally all of the property went to Leeford's wife and their child. Monks seems relieved to hear about it but Brownlow continues, saying that before his friend left England on his last journey, he left a portrait of the officer's daughter with Brownlow. At the time, Monks' father talked vaguely about providing for his legal wife and child, before settling outside England. Brownlow never saw him again or heard from him. Later, Brownlow made an attempt to see the dead man's beloved, but the family had already disappeared. Monk's look of triumph turns to dismay when Brownlow tells him that he was the one who sheltered Oliver until the boy was recaptured by the thieves. Brownlow refers to Oliver's resemblance to the picture of the

unfortunate girl. Since he could not recover Oliver, Brownlow decided that the mystery could be clarified only by Leeford's eldest son Monks, who had retired to the West Indies after his mother's death. So Brownlow went there and learnt that Monks was in London. Brownlow stubbornly kept up the search without being able to catch up with his target - until two hours ago.

Thinking that he has heard all of the old gentleman's story, Monks becomes boldly defies and points out that the likeness between a picture and a child is not a convincing evidence, especially when his accuser does not even know if the lovers ever had a child. In reply, Brownlow addresses the young man fiercely, declaring that now he does know the whole truth. He accuses Monks' mother of destroying the will where it was clearly mentioned. Brownlow also confronts Monks with the very words Monks spoke after dropping the locket into the river in the presence of the Bumbles. Brownlow reproves him mercilessly, adding that he knows everything that passed between Monks and Fagin. He also reminds Monks that he is morally responsible for the murder of Nancy. This breaks down Monks and he agrees to tell all of the facts, before witnesses and in writing. Brownlow makes it clear that Oliver has been defrauded and that Monks must make amends to Oliver in accordance with the terms of the destroyed will of their father. This does not go down well with Monks, but just then, Mr. Losberne is admitted, in a high state of excitement. He informs that Sikes's dog has been seen and the owner is sure to be trapped in the neighbourhood. Harry Maylie has gone to join the manhunt. The doctor also says that the arrest of Fagin is certain. Having heard all this, Monks accepts the conditions for his liberation, and Brownlow promises to guard the secret.

Monks is locked in the room alone and Brownlow quickly informs the doctor of his success. Brownlow has added fifty pounds to the one hundred offered for the capture of Sikes who has murdered Nancy. Thus, in Chapter 49, in a dramatic way the truth concerning Oliver and some of the other characters are revealed. We can see now that, although at the outset the story promised to be a chronological record starting from the hero's birth, the chain of events leading up to the opening situation was set in motion

over twenty-five years before. The flashback technique is used to supply essential details of the past, the point of view coming from various characters. All the details seem more believable due to the fact that now there is agreement between people with opposing interests.

The narrative continues to progress as the novel rushes to a conclusion. A high state of excitement is set in motion by the rapid succession of stirring events. As a counterpoint, the reader is conscious of important activities, happening parallel at the same time in various places. Elsewhere in a small island called Jacob's Island on the banks of Thames, we are told that some of the former comrades of Sikes have gathered speaking about what happened to Fagin and his gang of members. They are interrupted by the arrival of Sikes whom they are not very pleased to see. In the rejection of Sikes by his former comrades, we see another example of how totally the thief and murdered is disowned. He is rejected by his own class. By killing Nancy, he has broken the bond of mutual interest. The arrival of Charles Bates leads to the public disclosure of Sikes. Bates is furious on seeing him and tries to apprehend him.

The setting for the final performance of Sikes's violent career is appropriate. There is wry irony when he screams at the gathered crowd that he would cheat them yet. A melodramatic peak is reached as the bloodthirsty mob roars and shrieks at the fugitive trapped on the roof of the crumbling building. The spirit of Nancy and her accusing eyes, causes Sikes to slip and fall to his death, fulfilling some traditional concepts of poetic justice. Sikes is soon joined by his dog that plunges to its death after the master.

CHAPTERS 51 TO 53

The concluding chapters tell us about the fate of the characters. We are told that two days later, a carriage is travelling toward Oliver's birthplace. Oliver is riding in the chaise with Mrs. Maylie, Rose, Dr. Losberne, and Mrs. Bedwin. Mr. Brownlow is following with another person in another chaise. Brownlow's recent activities have been revealed to Oliver and the ladies, but there are still some questions remaining to be answered in the narrative.

Oliver is excited and happy to come back to his old place He is especially determined to relieve his friend Dick and provide him a similar life that he enjoys at the Maylies. The party go to the best hotel, where they are gallantly received by Grimwig. All arrangements for rooms and dinner have been made.

At dinner, the air of mystery and tension still prevails, especially when Brownlow does not join the party. Mr. Losberne and Grimwig enters and soon exits to talk. Mrs. Maylie is sent for and returns an hour later with swollen eyes. Rose and Oliver is not informed of anything. Finally, at nine o'clock in the evening, the gentleman brings Monks into the room and Oliver is surprised to see him. He had expected to see a brother, but he recognises him as the man he met in the market town and later saw looking in his window with Fagin. Mr. Brownlow walks up with papers, informing Monks that although the instruments have been executed in London, it is necessary to review the details here. Monks asks that the business be settled quickly. Mr. Brownlow accordingly opens the session stating that Oliver is his half-brother and the illegitimate son of his father, Edwin Leeford, by poor young Agnes Fleming, who died in giving him birth.

Monks sarcastically confirms this and, as agreed, begins a summary of the matter recorded in the papers. He fills in the details concerning his father's death. Edwin Leeford had left two papers, dated when he first became ill. They were addressed to Mr. Brownlow with the instructions that they not be mailed until after the writer's death. The first paper was a letter to Agnes Fleming, who was then several months pregnant. The girl had trusted in Leeford's guarded explanation that there was difficulty for an immediate marriage. He alluded to his gift of a locket and a ring with a blank left for his name to be engraved. The letter was filled with incoherent, repetitions stating regret and honourable motives. Brownlow takes up the subject of the will. The dying father had written about the misery, his wife caused him and the wicked nature of his son, Edward who had been taught since childhood to hate him. So he left to each of them eight hundred pounds annually. The bulk of the property was to be divided between Agnes Fleming and their expected child, if the child should live until its adulthood. It is stated that a girl

would inherit unconditionally. Then it is mentioned that a boy would receive the money only if he has never have stained his name by any public act of dishonour, meanness, cowardice, or wrong. This last provision was an expression of confidence that a son of Agnes Fleming's would follow in her honest goodness. If the expectation was not fulfilled, then the legacy would go to Monks, as the senior nominee in the will. Monks then reports that his mother burned the will, but she kept the letter in case it should ever be necessary to document the irregular relationship between Leeford and Agnes. The girl confessed to her father, who then took his family to Wales and changed his name. Agnes eloped, and her father searched for her until he became convinced that she had committed suicide. The heart-broken father then died soon after this.

Brownlow remarks that years later, Edward Leeford's mother came to him. At the age of eighteen, her son had robbed her and then fled to London, where he spent two years among the social miscreants. The woman was ill and anxious to reclaim her son. Ultimately he meets her in France. Monks picks up the narrative by offering the information that his mother, before she died, told him all of the secrets. She was not persuaded that Agnes had taken her life, but was obsessed with the notion that there was a male child living. The dying woman's son promised her that if he ever found such a child, he would hunt down his half-brother and do everything that is required to destroy his life.

Here Brownlow adds that Fagin was a former associate of Monks and was paid to bring about Oliver's destruction. Part of the money was to be refunded if the boy was rescued, and for that reason the two plotters went to identify him in the country. Now Brownlow asks about the locket and ring, and Monks briefly states the facts. Grimwig brings in Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, and the couple denies having anything to do with either Monks or of a locket and ring. Next, two old pauper women are brought in. They claimed that they were listening outside the door when Sally died and know that the matron took a paper from the corpse and got a locket and ring from a pawnshop the following day. Sally had also told them that the girl, driven by

a sense of approaching death, was striving to reach her lover's grave. When she found that she couldn't disprove the accusation, Mrs. Bumble admits everything. Brownlow states that the Bumbles will be deprived of any socially responsible position. Bumble is upset that he has to lose his office and shows his true selfish nature by expressing whether he will be considered guilty if his wife is guilty.

After the disclosure concerning Oliver, Brownlow hints that there is also something coming that concerns Rose. When he asks what became of Agnes's younger sister, Monks asserts that after the death of the old officer, the child was adopted by some country folk. Brownlow failed to locate the girl, but Monks's mother succeeded in doing so. With a series of deceptions and lies, she prejudiced the adoptive parents against the child. The revenge-minded woman spoke of Agnes' past and said that her young sister was illegitimate, and because of this, the girl had to suffer a miserable existence after her adoptive parents abandoned her. Fortunately, she was noticed and taken away by Mrs. Maylie. Monks lost track of the girl two or three years later and had not seen her again until recently. This amazing revelation makes the Maylies and Oliver surprised and happy. Harry joins Rose by saying that he knows everything. He reminds her that he has permission to renew his earlier desire to marry her but Rose's position remains unchanged; there is still disgrace in her background. Harry's next move is to declare that he has nothing to offer but a heart and home, having altered his station in life to become her equal. When she refused him again, he confesses having severed all connections of rank and power of his early life to become a village parson and to lead a simple life.

The young couple then rejoin the company for supper and everyone is in a state of merry. But Oliver's happiness is short-lived when he learns about the death of his friend, Dick. In this chapter, all the significant remaining gaps in the tale are filled. Meanwhile the courtroom is packed with people on the day of Fagin's hearing. In this grim depiction of Fagin's last days, Dickens presents a disheartening picture. We see the same isolation felt by Fagin that was earlier suffered by Sikes. In the courtroom, the accused becomes

absolutely indifferent as he realizes that no one wants him alive. This is the punishment caused by his ulterior motives. He has been an enemy of society, and now all men are united against him. The final price of leading is degradation and death. He is visited by Oliver and Brownlow. And by that time Fagin is hallucinating and losing his sanity. The sight distresses Oliver so much that his guardian takes him away. The visit of Brownlow and Oliver to the prison is a clever dramatic way to demonstrate that the boy and the ladies have now been told about the fates that have come to members of the gang.

In the final chapter of the novel closes a description of the different characters and their fate is given. We come to know that within three months, Rose Fleming and Harry Maylie are married and they move to their country parsonage along with Mrs. Maylie. The property which was under Monks's possession would yield three thousand pounds a year for each of the three shares into which it has been divided. Even though Oliver is the rightful heir, Mr. Brownlow suggests that Monks should keep half of it, and start life in a good way. To this Oliver readily agrees, and Monks goes away to the New World. But as old habits die hard, Monks misused all his money and returned to world of crime. Later he died in a prison. All the other members of Fagin's gang are also transported far from England. Noah Claypole receives pardon for testifying against Fagin, and he becomes an informer assisted by Charlotte. Charles Bates shocked by Sikes' crime and terrible end gave up his dishonest ways, and settled in Northamptonshire as a herdsman.

Oliver, after being adopted by Mr. Browlow, starts living with his guardian and Mrs Bedwin near the parsonage. Dr. Losberne, missing his friends, starts living in the countryside pursuing all kinds of rural activities. He finds a companion in Grimwig who becomes a frequent visitor to his residence. Giles and Brittles continue serving the families of Maylies, Mr. Brownlow and Dr. Losberne. Meanwhile after losing their positions, the Bumbles' economic condition becomes worse, and finally they too become the inmates of a workhouse.

So the traditional concept of poetic justice is fulfilled when the evil

characters had to suffer for their misdeeds whereas the good-hearted and the repentant ones are rewarded with a life filled with peace and happiness. In the concluding lines we are told about an empty tomb with a marble tablet inside the old church that bears the name of "Agnes." Thus the last chapter ends by dramatically revealing the destiny of the characters.



10.6 LET US SUM UP

After reading the unit on Charles Dickens' life and works you have come to know that Dickens created an astonishingly vast collection of engaging novels that grasped the attention of the readers. Dickens was able to maintain a writing schedule that would have exhausted any other author but Dickens was different. It was within a period of three and a half decades that he created numerous literary pieces like no other author. During this period, Dickens published more than twenty novels and worked as an editor for various literary journals. He also brought out his own literary magazine, and at the same time, worked as a freelance reporter, and performed a series of charismatic public readings. Soon, he became one of the most popular literary figures in the English society. His significance as an important author of English literature is easily identified in contemporary literary canons. Dickens' second novel *Oliver Twist* was begun in February 1837 and it continued in the form of episodes in Bentley's *Miscellany* until April, 1839. The author had originally titled the novel *Oliver Twist: The Parish Boy's Progress* but later decided to keep it simply as *Oliver Twist*. The novel was initially categorised within the genre of a children's fiction but later it was established that it contains social protest as Dickens vehemently speaks about the Poor Laws and workhouses. Dickens uses his hyperbolic irony and sentimentalism in *Oliver Twist* to create characters residing in the grim criminal world of industrial London.



10.7 FURTHER READING

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6) Meyer, Susan. (2005). "Anti-Semitism and Social Critique in Dickens' Oliver Twist." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33.1, JSTOR. Web.

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1) http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/o/oliver-twist/critical-essays/plot-and-structure-of-oliver-twist,

2) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver_Twist



10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Dickens is famous for his portrayal of characters. His characters often come out as caricatures.

Ans to Q No 2: The strenuous and often harsh working conditions made a lasting impression on Dickens. Later they become the foundation of his interest in the reform of socio-economic and labour conditions in England.

Ans to Q No 3: *Sketches by Boz*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, *Old Curiosity Shop*, *Barnaby Rudge*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Dombey and Sons*, *David*

Copperfield, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend* and so on.

Ans to Q No 4: Social stratification in the English society, disorder following the repressive measures of the Government, heavy tax imposed on the common people to support military resources, the imposition of Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 following which paupers were to work in the workhouses under terrible conditions.

Ans to Q No 5: *Oliver Twist* is an early example of the social novel and the book represents the various social evils of Dickens' time such as child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children. Dickens uses his fiction as a way to mock the hypocrisies shown by the rich people of his time.



10.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1: Discuss some of the socio-political conditions out of which Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist* emerged.

Q 2: Dickens is famous for his portrayal of characters who often come out as caricatures. Discuss with reference to some of his fictional works.

Q 3: Compare Oliver Twist with some other boys of the same age who grapples with various adversities in the novel.

Q 4: How is the world of crime is depicted in the novel *Oliver Twist*?

Q 5: Discuss how Dickens pairs some characters for contrast and how this technique further develops the plot of the novel.

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