

MACMILLAN GUIDED READERS

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

CHARLES DICKENS

Oliver Twist

Retold by Margaret Turner



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1

Early Days

The orphan boy did not die. And Mr Bumble gave him a name.

Mr Bumble was the parish beadle⁷. He gave all the orphans names when they arrived in the workhouse. He named them using the letters of the alphabet. T was the next letter. So Mr Bumble named the child Twist – Oliver Twist.

Oliver was now eleven years old. He was a pale, thin child. All the workhouse children were thin and ill. They were always hungry.

The boys were fed three times a day. But all they got to eat was a small bowl of gruel⁸. Three small bowls of gruel were not enough. The hungry boys were desperate⁹. They had a meeting and made a decision. One of them must ask for more food. The boys chose Oliver Twist!

Evening came. The boys stood in a line in the long, stone hall. They waited for their bowls of gruel. They ate very quickly. In a moment, every bowl was empty. All the boys looked at Oliver.

Oliver was very afraid. But he was also very hungry. Carrying his bowl, he walked up to the master of the workhouse. Oliver looked up at the man and spoke.

‘Please, sir, I want some more,’ he whispered.

‘What did you say?’ the master said in surprise.

‘Please, sir, I want some more,’ Oliver repeated.

The master gave a great shriek¹⁰. He took hold of Oliver by the collar of his thin shirt.

‘Get the beadle! Bring Mr Bumble here!’ the master shouted in anger.

In a few minutes, Mr Bumble hurried in. He was a bad-



'Please, sir, I want some more,' Oliver whispered.

tempered big, fat man. He wore a big hat and carried a long, thin stick.

‘Well, what’s the matter?’ Mr Bumble asked angrily.

‘Oliver Twist has asked for more!’ the master cried.

‘Asked for more?’ Mr Bumble repeated. He glared¹¹ at Oliver. ‘He’s asking us for more! This boy is bad, very bad. One day he’ll be hanged¹². Give him to me!’

Then Mr Bumble took hold of Oliver. He beat the poor child with his stick. When the beadle was tired, he threw Oliver onto the ground.

‘Lock the boy in a dark room!’ he shouted. ‘Then he must leave the workhouse. He can’t stay here. He will be sold as an apprentice¹³.’

The next day, a notice was put up outside the workhouse.

PARISH BOY FOR SALE

*£5 will be paid to anyone who will take
a parish boy as an apprentice.*

Oliver sat in the dark room in the cellar. He was cold, hungry and afraid.

If I stay here, I’ll die, he thought. But a new master may kill me. I’ll run away!

The night was cold and dark. Oliver climbed carefully out of a small window. He hurried along the quiet streets.

There was a large stone outside the town. On it was written, LONDON – 10 MILES.

‘Mr Bumble won’t find me in London,’ Oliver said to himself. ‘I’ll get work there, I’m sure.’

So Oliver started to walk. He walked for seven days. Sometimes he begged¹⁴ for food. Most of the time, he was hungry.

At last, Oliver reached Barnet, a town near London. But he

was too hungry and exhausted to go on. He sat down by the side of the road.

A strange-looking boy was standing on the other side of the road. The boy had a small nose that turned up at the end and a very dirty face. He wore a man's coat which was far too big for him. His old hat was on the back of his head. The boy stood there, with his hands in his pockets. He stared at Oliver with his sharp little eyes.

At last, he walked over to Oliver and spoke.

'Hallo. What's the matter with you?' the strange boy asked.

Oliver began to cry.

'I'm very tired. And I'm very hungry,' he said.

'Hungry?' the boy repeated. 'I'll buy you some food. Come with me.'

A few minutes later, Oliver was eating bread and meat.

The strange boy watched Oliver eating. Then he spoke again.

'My friends call me the Artful Dodger,' the boy said. 'Are you going to London?'

'Yes, I am,' Oliver replied.

'Got any place to sleep? Any money?' the Dodger asked.

'No,' Oliver answered sadly. 'Do you live in London?'

'Yes, I do. And I'm going there tonight,' the Dodger replied. 'I know an old gentleman there. He'll give you a place to sleep.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you,' Oliver said.

When it was dark, the two boys began walking to London. At eleven o'clock, they reached the great city.

The Dodger led Oliver along narrow, dirty streets. The streets were full of poorly-dressed people. The noise and the darkness made Oliver very afraid.

Suddenly, the Dodger stopped. He opened a door and whistled¹⁵.

It was very dark inside the house. The Dodger pulled Oliver

up the broken stairs. He opened a door and then pushed Oliver into a dark and dirty room.

2

At Fagin's

The walls of the room were black with dirt.. There was a table near the fire. On the table was a bottle, with a lighted candle in it.

A very old man was standing near the fire. He turned quickly as the two boys came into the room.

The old man had a beard and his face was ugly and wrinkled¹⁶. On his head was a hat and his long, dirty red hair hung down his back. He stared at Oliver with his bright, dark eyes.

There were four or five boys in the room. They were sitting on old sacks¹⁷. The boys got up and came and stood close to the Dodger. He whispered a few words to the old man. Then the Dodger spoke in a louder voice.

'Fagin, this is my new friend, Oliver Twist,' the Dodger said.

The old man smiled at Oliver.

'Very pleased to see you, Oliver, my dear,' the old man said. 'Come nearer to the fire, my boy.'

Oliver stared round the dirty room. There was a rope tied across one corner of the room. Many brightly-coloured silk handkerchiefs¹⁸ were hanging over the rope.

Fagin smiled again.

'My handkerchiefs are pretty, aren't they, Oliver?' he said. 'And they're all waiting to be washed!'

To Oliver's surprise, all the boys laughed.

Supper was ready. Soon everyone was eating and drinking.

Fagin gave Oliver a strong, hot drink.

'Drink this, Oliver, my boy,' the old man said.

Oliver drank. Suddenly, he felt very sleepy. Someone lifted him onto some old sacks. Immediately Oliver fell asleep.

Oliver woke up late the next morning. The boys were not there. But Fagin was sitting at the table. In front of him was an open box.

The old man took a gold watch from the box. He looked at it and smiled. One by one, he held up rings, chains and jewels. Very carefully, he put each one back in the box.

Suddenly, Fagin turned. He grabbed¹⁹ a knife from the table and stood up quickly. Fagin glared at Oliver.

'Why are you watching me?' the old man cried. 'Did you see my pretty things?'

'Yes, sir. I'm very sorry, sir,' Oliver replied. He was shaking with fear.

Fagin laughed and put down the knife.

'These pretty things are for my old age,' the old man said. 'I'm keeping them so I'll have some money when I'm old. You won't say anything to the others, will you, my boy?'

'Oh no, sir,' Oliver replied.

'Then get up now,' Fagin said. 'Get washed. There's water in a bowl by the door.'

Oliver walked to the door. When he turned back, the box of gold and jewels was gone.

Some time later, the Dodger returned. A boy called Charley Bates was with him. Fagin, Oliver, the Dodger and Charley sat down to eat a breakfast of bread, meat and coffee.

'I hope you've worked hard this morning,' Fagin said to the boys. 'What have you got, Dodger?'

The Dodger gave Fagin two wallets²⁰.

'Good,' the old man said with a smile. 'Very nicely made, Dodger. What have you got, Charley?'