

A young boy with blonde hair, wearing a dark cap and a dark coat, stands in the center of the poster. He is looking upwards with a hopeful expression. The background is a dark blue night sky filled with falling snow and a city skyline silhouette. The ground is a cobblestone path.

OLIVER TWIST

A FAMILY CLASSIC WITH A FESTIVE TWIST

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SCHOOL'S RESOURCE PACK

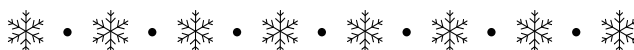
HULL TRUCK THEATRE PRESENTS

OLIVER TWIST

28 NOV 2025 - 4 JAN 2026

SCHOOL'S RESOURCE PACK

Contents	Page
Plot Synopsis of <i>Oliver Twist</i>	3-4
The Characters of <i>Oliver Twist</i>	5-6
Charles Dickens at a Glance	7
The life of Charles Dickens	8
Dickensian England	9
Unusual Language in <i>Oliver Twist</i>	10-11
Classroom Activities	12-19



This resource pack has been created by Hull Truck Theatre's Creative Learning team to accompany our Christmas 2025 production of *Oliver Twist*.

If you are interested in booking a workshop to accompany your visit to the theatre, or would like more information on our offer to schools and colleges, please contact the team on 01482 488209 or via engagement@hulltruck.co.uk.

Plot Synopsis of *Oliver Twist*

Please note that this synopsis is based on the show and may differ slightly from the novel.

Act I

Oliver is born on a cold winter's night in a workhouse, 70 miles from London.

When Oliver's mother dies during his birth, Oliver is sent to be raised on a farm until he is 9, when he is brought back to the workhouse.

Not long after he is sent to the workhouse for manual labour, a group of other orphans decide to play a game where the loser must ask for more food at mealtime. Oliver draws the short straw and must ask Mr Bumble for more, who reacts with anger and removes him from the workhouse.

Oliver is sent to work for a local undertaker, Mr. Sowerberry. After a very short time working as a coffin maker's apprentice, Nora Claypole insults his mother and they get into a fight. Oliver runs away, heading for London.

On the way, Oliver meets Dodger, who offers him food and takes him back to Fagin's lodgings, where he meets the other boys along with Nancy and Bet.

Fagin and the boys start to teach Oliver how to be a successful pickpocket, and he spends the night with them and Fagin. Oliver accidentally witnesses Fagin admiring her collection of stolen jewels, for which he is scolded, but allowed to stay.

Elsewhere, a sick woman named Old Sally is on her deathbed. She confesses to Widow Corney that she met Oliver's mother the night she died, and stole from her a gold locket engraved with the name Agnes. She asks Widow Corney to return it, and then dies; Widow Corney keeps the locket for herself.

Oliver is given permission from Fagin to go out with Dodger on the streets, where they intend to pick pockets. Dodger succeeds in stealing from a man but then runs away, leaving Oliver in the street to take the blame.

The man, Mr Brownlow, decides he doesn't want to press charges against Oliver, and after a short trial where Oliver becomes sick, takes him home to Pentonville with him along with his adopted daughter, Rose.

Act II

In Act II, Bill Sikes is introduced. Fagin tells him and Nancy about Oliver and sends them to retrieve the boy before he has a chance to talk to the police about them.

In Pentonville, Oliver is sent to return some books for Brownlow with five pounds. Whilst out, Nancy finds him, and forcibly takes him back to Fagin with the help of Sikes. Nancy, feeling guilty for what she's done, refuses to allow Fagin to hurt the boy.

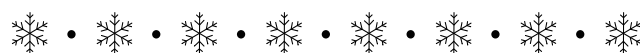
Back in Pentonville, Mr Brownlow and Rose issue a reward in the paper for Oliver's safe return or anyone who has information on the boy's past. Widow Corney and Mr Bumble, who are now married, see the advert and Mr Bumble travels to London with the locket intending to make money from it.

Bill and Fagin begin to plan a robbery that must involve Oliver as he is slight enough to break in to the house. Fagin notices Nancy's hesitation and tells Dodger to keep an eye on her, to ensure she does not betray them.

Nancy visits Rose and Mr Brownlow with information about Oliver. Dodger sees what she's done and runs to tell Fagin, who tells Bill Sikes.

Nancy brings Oliver to Brownlow and Rose on London Bridge, but Bill follows her. Bill strikes Nancy in a rage, killing her. A chase ensues as it is revealed what Bill has done, and he tries to get away, but ends up hanging himself in the process.

Back with Oliver and Rose, Oliver is told about his mother and Rose being his aunt. They embrace, and after a scene where they visit Fagin in prison, the plays end with Oliver happy with his family.



The Characters of *Oliver Twist*

Oliver Twist

An orphan born in a workhouse.

Agnes

Oliver's mother who died during childbirth.

Old Sally

A poor woman who is present at Oliver's birth and Agnes's death, and steals the locket from Agnes.

Mr Bumble

The Beadle (a parish officer) of the workhouse where Oliver was born.

Window Corney

The woman in charge of the workhouse where Oliver is born. She marries Mr Bumble.

Mr & Mrs Sowerberry

A coffin maker and his wife. They accept Oliver as an apprentice.

Nora Claypole

Mr Sowerberry's apprentice. (In the novel this is a boy named Noah.)

Charlotte

The Sowerberry's maid.

Dodger

Known as 'The Artful Dodger', he is a pickpocket in Fagin's gang. His real name is Jack Dawkins.

Fagin

A criminal with a gang of homeless children, who she teaches to make their livings by pickpocketing and other criminal activities, in exchange for shelter.

Charley

Young boy and member of Fagin's gang of pickpockets.

Bet

One of former member of Fagin's gang, Nancy's close friend.

Nancy

One of Fagin's former child pickpockets who is now in the company of Bill Sikes.

Rose

Agnes's sister and Oliver's aunt.

Mr Brownlow

A man who defends Oliver when he is accused of stealing and eventually, becomes his adoptive father.

Justice Fang

The magistrate who Oliver appears before when he is accused of stealing

Bill Sikes

A vicious criminal whom is part of Fagin's gang and eventually kills his girlfriend, Nancy.

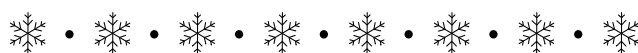
Mrs Bedwin

Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper.

Mr Grimwig

A good friend of Mr Brownlow.

There is also a chorus of workhouse children, Fagin's gang, and the other people of London including a Policeman and market traders.



Charles Dickens at a Glance

Born

Charles John Huffam Dickens in Portsmouth on 7th February 1812.

Died

9th June 1870 aged 58.

First publication

The Pickwick Papers in 1836.

Final book

The Mystery of Edwin Drood which was unfinished at the time of Dickens's death in 1936.

Notable works

Oliver Twist, *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*.

Fun Facts

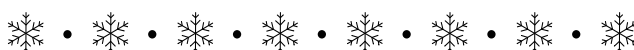
The Oxford English Dictionary credits Dickens with introducing 247 new words or new usages into the language.

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, he mentions “Husky chips of potato, fried with some reluctant drops of oil,” which is the earliest reference to crisps.

Charles Dickens had such an influence over Literature that the word ‘Dickensian’ was invented to describe novels that are written in a similar style. Dickensian novels can be identified by their bleak storylines, repulsive characters and the poor social conditions that the characters live in.

Dickens and Hull

Charles Dickens gave readings, in 1859 and 1860, at The Assembly Rooms (now known as Hull New Theatre). His visits are celebrated and remembered by a blue plaque on the building.



The Life of Charles Dickens

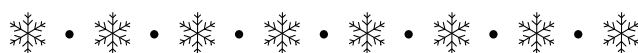
Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on the 7th February 1812 in Portsmouth, England. He was the second child of John and Elizabeth Hoffman Dickens. A lot of Dickens' young life was similar to the life of the eponymous protagonist of his book, Oliver Twist.

The Dickens family were very poor. Dicken's Father, John Dickens, worked as a clerk in the Naval Pay Office, but he wasn't very good with numbers. When Dickens was only 11 years old, his parents had to take him out of school because they could no longer afford to pay the fees.

The following year was a difficult time for the whole Dickens family. Just after Charles turned 12, he was sent to work at Warren's Blacking Factory, a place that made the polish for boots. That same month, John Dickens was sentenced to prison for failing to repay a debt. Though young Charles tried desperately to raise the money to keep his father out of jail, on 23 February John Dickens reported to prison. The entire family – except Charles, who was still working at the factory, and his older sister Fanny – moved in to John's prison cell.

This sad time in Dickens' life was what inspired him to write many of his novels. The blacking factory was a miserable place and living alone at a boarding house while his family was in prison often made Charles very sick and sad. Thankfully, John Dickens eventually received an inheritance and was able to arrange to have his debt paid off. The whole family moved in together again at the boarding house where Charles had been living, and by June 1824 Charles was able to go back to school.

Charles Dickens never got over his fear of poverty, or the hard times he experienced during his family's crisis. Scenes from the factory, the boarding house, and the prison all inspired his writing. He even named the Oliver Twist character Fagin after a man he met at the factory, Bob Fagin. We believe Bob Fagin potentially introduced Dickens to the ways of the factory just as the fictional Fagin shows Oliver the correct way to pick pockets.



Dickensian England

Definition

'Dickensian England' is a term which refers to the period covered by Charles Dickens' books (i.e. mid-Victorian period). The term suggests the poor social and economic conditions of the time, for example, what we see in many of Dickens novels.

Monarchy

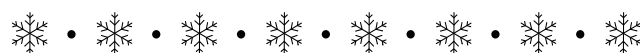
Queen Victoria (1837-1901)

Population

The British Population rose from 16 million to 37 million in the Victorian Era.

Facts about Dickensian England

- Dickensian London was well-known for its fog, which was often extremely thick. Apparently, people regularly walked into the River Thames because they couldn't see where they were going. Dickens talks about this fog in Chapter 1 of *Bleak House*: "Fog everywhere. Fog up the river... fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city."
- The Poor Law Amendment Act was brought in to make sure anyone who was able to work was required to do so in a workhouse in order to get relief or aid. Dickens widely criticised the workhouses, like seen in the beginning of *Oliver Twist* - for example, the harsh treatment of Oliver.
- Most Victorians wore a lot of black- not just due to mourning loved ones- but because of the horrendous pollution in the city which would often turn light coloured dresses darker.
- Victorians would often walk everywhere, so some workers would walk over an hour to then start an eighteen-hour day.
- In 1840 one third of children died before being five-years-old.
- 'John' and 'Mary' were amongst the most popular names during the Victorian- era.
- The Police Force was created during the Victorian period by Sir Robert Peel - hence the nickname 'Bobbies.'

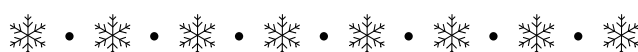


The Language in Oliver Twist

The table below shows a list of some of the less known words and phrases that appear in Hull Truck's production of Oliver Twist.

Word	Definition	Line in the play
Wassailing	Going door-to-door, singing and offering a drink from the wassail bowl in exchange for gifts.	CHORUS: (singing) Here we come a wassailing among the leaves so green.
Parochial	Relating to a Church parish, or having a limited or narrow outlook or scope.	BUMBLE: A boy who is, a millstone, as I may say, around the parochial throat.
Beadle/ Beadlehood	A ceremonial officer of a church, college, or similar institution.	BUMBLE: When the man before her stood In the bloom of beadlehood.
Oakum	Loose fibre obtained by untwisting old rope, used especially in caulking wooden ships.	CORNEY: Picking Oakum from six in the morning.
Mire	A complicated or unpleasant situation from which it is difficult to extricate oneself.	CHILDREN: (singing) Think of us poor children Who are wand'ring in the mire.
Millstone	A significant stage or event in the development of something.	BUMBLE: A boy, who is, at present, a millstone.

Word	Definition	Line in the play
Peached	Informed on snitched on.	FAGIN: Never Peached upon old Fagin.
Japanning my trotter-cases	Cleaning my shoes.	DODGER: Here, Oliver. Fancy Japanning my trotter-cases?
Rum	Odd or unusual.	CHARLOTTE: Oh Noah, what a rum creature you are.
Beak	A judge or magistrate.	DODGER: He was up before the beak.
Fourp'ny bran	Costing four pennies for a loaf of bread.	DODGE: He fishes in his pockets and pulls out a small loaf. Fourp'ny bran?
Avaricious	Having or showing an extreme greed for wealth or material gain.	SIKES: Ill-treating the boys, you avaricious old fence?
Blight	A thing that spoils or damages something.	ROSE: A portionless girl with a blight upon my name.



Classroom Activities

The following section has been designed to give teachers and group leaders inspiration for classroom activities based on Hull Truck Theatre's production of *Oliver Twist*. These can be used to prepare your class/group for their theatre trip or used to connect the trip back to the classroom as follow up activities.

The exercises are simply suggestions or ideas and can be adapted to fit your specific group and their needs.

The activities break up in to five sections:

1. Before Coming to the Theatre - p12-13
2. Exploring the Story - p14-15
3. Examining the Characters - p15-17
4. Drama and Performance ideas - p17-19

1. Before Coming to the Theatre

How much does your class or group know about *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens and Victorian England?

Resources

Large paper, felt-tip pens and several devices with access to the internet.

Set Up

Divide your group up in to groups of 5 or 6 with three large pieces of paper and range of pens. Ask them to write at the top of each piece of paper the headings; *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens and Victorian England. The paper will then need to be split in to two sections; 1. what you know, and 2. what you don't know/any questions you have. Each group will need a device with access to the internet which could be laptop or tablet.

Part 1

Give the class 1 minute timed for each heading to write down everything they know/think they know about the subject. (You may want to turn this into a game about which groups writes down the most things but remember that some participants might not know anything about the headings.)

Then, give the group 1 minute for each heading to write down anything they don't know about the subject or questions that they have.

Start by asking the group to feedback what they already knew about the headings. When a group offers some knowledge ask the other groups if they too had this answer. Answers can be as simple as "Oliver Twist is a book." You can discuss any answer that are interesting or need further discussion as you go along.

If any answers are incorrect ask them to add this to their list of questions. Collate the group's collective knowledge on the white board. Once you have collated all the knowledge you can turn your attention to their questions/things they don't know.

Part 2

Get feedback from the group on what they don't know and any questions they may have regarding Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens and Victorian England. Write all the questions on the board. Once you've got all the questions written on the board divide them up between the groups. (Each group could have 2 or 3 questions each or if you haven't got enough questions they can all take the same.)

Give each group 20 minutes to use their laptop or tablet to research, plan and prepare a presentation for the rest of the group that leave all questions answered.

Finish with the group presentations and follow each presentation up by asking the participants who are watching to comment on what information they found most interesting.

2. Exploring the Story

Activity 1

Ensure that your group have a thorough understanding of the plot of *Oliver Twist*.

Print off a copy of the plot synopsis provided in this pack and cut it in to smaller sections. The size of these sections depends on the ability of your class or group.

Split your class into smaller groups of 5 or 6. Ask them to arrange the sections in the correct order of the plot.

You want to make this a competitive game and give rewards for speed and accuracy.

Once completed go through the plot section by section to ensure everyone is correct, you may also want to make references back to the production to jog participant's memories.

Activity 2

Use creative writing to enhance student's understanding of a key moment within *Oliver Twist*.

Ask the students to choose a key moment from *Oliver Twist*. Some examples of key moments could be:

- Oliver appearing before the Magistrate
- Bill Sikes' murder of Nancy
- Fagin being caught by authorities

Ask the students to write a newspaper article describing the event in a journalistic style. Ask the students to consider what sort of language they should use to write the article. (You may wish to provide an example of a current piece of news.)

One way to structure this activity could be:

1. Factual writing – The facts of the story, what happened and when?
2. Emotional writing – What do people involved with the story feel?
Perhaps an interview with a bystander or character?
3. Opinion writing – Interview with an expert or character. What do they think happened?

Tip: participants could use the language glossary from earlier in this pack to add some Dickensian language to their article

Activity 3

Using visual art to display learning about the plot of *Oliver Twist*.

Ask the class to individually design and create a 'wanted poster' for Fagin, Bill Sikes or a member of the gang for the crimes they've committed during the production.

As well as drawing the character you may ask students to show:

- What are they accused of?
- Where might they be found?
- Are they dangerous?
- Is there a reward?

Ask the group to think about the style of the poster and the language used.

Section 3. Examining the Characters

Activity 1

Give your participants the opportunity to recap the character and discuss them in detail.

Using the character list provided in this pack on page 5-6 ask the participants to discuss each character. You may want to give them these questions as a starting point:

1. What is the character like at the start of the play?
2. What is the character like at the end of the play?
3. Has this character's situation or outlook changed during the play?
4. What do you think this character wants/needs more than anything in the world?
5. What do you think is that character's greatest fear and why?

Activity 2

Start a debate with your students about each character's role in the story. Print off A4 sheets of paper, each with a character name on. You may want to limit this to key characters. Get a group of your students to stand up holding a name each so that the rest of the class can clearly read them.

Ask the remaining group to move their fellow students to stand in left to right order of:

- Who is the cruellest character?
- Who is the kindest character?
- Which character do you feel most sorry for?
- Which character is the most foolish?

You may find there is little debate who is on either extreme (i.e. most cruel and least cruel) but the most interesting debates may come from comparing different characters. Who should be in second or third place for kindness? What have they done or not that earns them these places.

Move the characters around until the class agree (if they do agree) on the final order.

Activity 3

Once you feel students have fully got to grips with the character you may wish to focus their learning on a specific character or moment. For the benefit of this example we will focus on Nancy but you could use any character.

The most important moments for characters in plays are moments when they make live decisions on stage. These moments are vital as they show how character's actions further the plot or story.

Some key decisions that Nancy makes include:

- She decides to intervene and stop Fagin from striking Oliver: **“No. I won’t stand by and see it done, Fagin. You’ve got the boy, and what more would you have? Let him be, or shall I put that mark on you that will bring you to the gallows before your time.”**
- She decides to visit Rose, confess her part in Oliver’s disappearance and help to reunite them: **“Let me stand, lady; and do not speak to me so kindly till you know me better. I am the girl that dragged little Oliver away on the night he went from this house.”**

Ask the students to write a diary entry from the perspective of Nancy (or another character) set after their big decision. Encourage them to think about:

- What was going on in their head before their decision?
- What other options did they consider?
- How did they feel before, during and after?

What do they think will happen next?

4. Drama and Performance Ideas

Activity 1

A day in the life Dickensian London and the world of Oliver Twist.

During this activity you will be asking the group to walk around the room in character. You may wish to play a drama game first that involves moving around the room to warm the group up. There are lots of example of these games online and printed drama game books. For example, the traffic light game.

Once you feel the group are happy walking around the room you are going to introduce them to character archetypes. We’re going to focus on two archetypes: the hungry pickpockets of Fagin’s gang and the Victorian Aristocracy who would look down on them/fear them.

Ask the group to walk around the room as they move make suggestions which they should interpret physically to create the characters.

Pickpocket:

- Move like you're hungry
- You're tired
- Every step is heavy
- You're scared of being caught
- You don't want to be seen

Victorian Aristocracy:

- You are confident
- You stand up tall
- Proud
- You're serious
- You may look down on others

It may be a good idea to briefly pause the group and ask participants who are displaying especially strong characterisation to show the other group their work.

Once you feel the group are confident in their walks you can split the group so that half of them are Pickpockets and the other half are the Aristocracy. Ask them to walk around the room together, they may interact, fear each other, avoid each other, etc. You may every so often want to pause the group and choose images that have emerged to highlight.

You even add a rule that whilst frozen, if you were to tap a character on the shoulder they should say what they are thinking or at least a word that describes how they feel.

Activity 2

Use still image to get students to create their own quick version of *Oliver Twist*.

Split the group into smaller groups of 5 or 6. Tell them that they are going to make a quick version of *Oliver Twist*. They're going to have 30 seconds to create a still-image of key moments of the play. They will be titled:

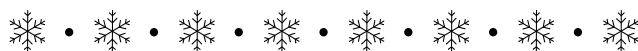
1. The beginning
2. The Middle
3. The end

Once they've created the still-image ask them to practice moving between them as smoothly as possible.

The next phase of this task is to get the group to add a line for each group member in each still image. This could be something a character says/thinks, or it could be a bit of narration as to what is going on.

Once you're happy they've done that you can ask them to add a moment in each image where they all come to life together.

Finally give the group 5 minutes to practice their mini *Oliver Twist* play. Finish by sharing a short-clip of each group's work.



Production images will be shared on Hull Truck Theatre's website, on the *Oliver Twist* show page. [CLICK HERE](#) to view them, or email boxoffice@hulltruck.co.uk if you'd like them sent to you.