

# LITERATURE 1A

## TEACHER'S NOTES

AUTHOR:	Charles Dickens
TITLE:	<i>Oliver Twist</i> (Chapter 2, reading Exercises 2, 3 & 4 Chapter 8, listening Exercise 8)
THEMES:	Money (unit 2), Food and drink (unit 3)
WRITING:	Character analysis
THINK STYLE:	Characterisation

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was born in Portsmouth, England. His works include *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1860).

Charles Dickens had a happy childhood until he was ten when the family moved to London. His father had financial difficulties and went to prison for debt. This changed Charles' life as he had to leave school and go to work in a factory. He later finished his education and became a journalist.

His experience in the factory inspired him to write about the poor and social injustice. Poor children are the main characters in many of his most famous books. He used his novels to criticise the social conditions of the time. The Poor Law of 1834 meant that the only way that extremely poor families could get help was to live and work in the workhouse. Conditions in the workhouses were deliberately dreadful so that only the very poor would enter. Families were separated and they received very little food and clothing in return for hard labour. Dickens hoped to raise awareness through his novel of the extreme poverty that was affecting many families in London at the time and of the conditions in the workhouses.

Dickens was famous for his humour, vivid descriptions of characters and accurate descriptions of society at the time. Many of his novels, including *Oliver Twist*, were written as serial publications: one or two chapters were published each month. Dickens was able to listen to his readers' opinions and change the characters' personalities if they were unpopular because he was still in the process of writing the novel. It wasn't just the characters that Dickens was interested in describing; descriptions of London also appear throughout his works.

### INTRODUCTION

Ask students if they have heard of Charles Dickens or *Oliver Twist*. Write any ideas on the board in note form. Use the information in the *About the author* box to provide an introduction. Ask if students know any of the novels mentioned – they may know *A Christmas Carol* or the character, Mr Scrooge. Depending on the class, it may be appropriate to use L1 at this stage.

### START THINKING ...

- 1 Draw students' attention to the film still at the top right of the worksheet. Elicit responses to the questions: *Who is in the first picture? How old do you think they are?* (lots of boys; around ten years old) *Do they look happy or sad?* (sad) *What are they doing?* (waiting for some food)

Organise the class into pairs or small groups. Set a time limit of a few minutes for students to discuss the questions. Then ask students for their opinions. Encourage them to back up their answers with examples. For example, 'I eat out in restaurants when it's someone's birthday.' 'I occasionally cook my own food.' Encourage them to use adverbs of frequency in their answers.

- 2 Draw students' attention to the text above the film still which 'sets the scene' and clarify understanding. Play the audio. When students have read and listened to the text once, allow time to check unfamiliar words in the glossary.

### Optional extension

Ask some comprehension questions to check general understanding of the text: *Does Oliver Twist have a family?* (No. He's an orphan.) *Who does he live with?* (lots of other boys) *Is he happy?* (no) *Is there a happy ending to this part of the text?* (no)

- 3 Students read through the questions. Check for understanding and remind them to refer closely to the text to find the answers.

### Answers

1 One of the masters served the boys. He wore an apron. 2 The boys were feeling hungry (desperate with hunger) when they made their plan. 3 Oliver felt hungry and unhappy when he spoke to the master. 4 Mr Bumble is a church official at the workhouse. He told the directors of the orphanage that Oliver asked for more food. 5 Oliver spent the night in a small, dark room.

- 4 Students read the text again. Discuss the questions and answers with the class.

### Suggested answers

1 They were so hungry that they didn't leave any food in their bowls. 2 The boys didn't have enough food, they were afraid of the master, they probably had difficult, unhappy lives. 3 They reacted angrily. It was probably the first time a boy had dared to ask for more food. They might have thought Oliver was rude. They thought they gave the boys enough to eat.



### CRITICAL THINKING

Ask the students the question: *Why did the gentlemen put Oliver in a room all alone?* Elicit that they put him in the room as a punishment. Then ask them: *Why did the gentlemen punish Oliver?* Elicit that they punished him because orphans weren't allowed to ask for more food. Now write the following on the board: *Was it a fair punishment?* Working individually, students write

at least one reason why it was a fair punishment, and at least one reason why it wasn't fair. If students struggle to think of a reason why it was fair, encourage them to put themselves in the place of a director of an orphanage in the 1800s. When students have finished, ask them to work in small groups to compare their ideas. You can then bring their arguments together on the board and discuss their ideas as a class. Ask them if they think Oliver should have been punished, and if so, what a fair punishment would be.

### Suggested answers

Fair: Oliver knew that he wasn't allowed to ask for more. He broke the rules. The directors had to punish him to stop other boys asking for more.

Unfair: Oliver was very hungry so didn't have a choice. He wasn't the only boy who wanted more. The master had already punished him when he hit him.

A fair punishment: Students' own answers.

## VOCABULARY

- 5 Read through the sentences one at a time to check comprehension of any unknown vocabulary. If necessary, refer to the information in the *About the author* box for more detail about social conditions in the 1830s. Working individually, students complete the sentences with the correct form of the words in the glossary. Ask individual students for answers.

### Answers

- 1 starvation 2 orphanage 3 saucepans  
4 hunger 5 Apprentices 6 desperate

### Optional extension

Ask students which facts they find interesting or surprising and why. Point out that these facts all relate to life in the 1830s and 1840s. Ask them to think about what life would have been like for a teenager in London at this time. You could split the class into two: half of the class imagine that they are rich, the other half imagine that they are poor. Ask them to think about their routines and everyday activities, living conditions, the food they eat, if they go to school and what they wear. Then the two sides compare their answers.

- 6 Ask students to read the text again and to underline five more words that are new to them. Ask them to write the words in sentences. They then read their sentences in pairs and correct each other's mistakes.

## ROLE PLAY

- 7 Organise the class into pairs. Read the instruction and check that students understand what they are going to do. Ask two students to read the first part of the conversation. Brainstorm ideas and write the ideas on the board. (soup every day, no meat, not much) Set a time limit of 5–10 minutes and then when they have finished, ask a pair of students to perform their role play to the class.

## LISTENING

- 8 Before listening, explain that students are going to hear what happened to Oliver Twist after he left the orphanage. Ask them: *Where does he go when he leaves the orphanage?* (Accept any sensible answer. He goes to London.) *How does he feel?* (sad, hungry, scared) Ask them to look at the questions and to think about the type of answer they need to find (noun, number, adjective, etc.). Play the recording twice. The first time, encourage students to listen without taking notes. The second time, they complete the sentences.

### Answers

- 1 70 2 work 3 shirt; bread 4 frightened; cold; hungry  
5 feet 6 boy; food

### Optional extension

Students might enjoy acting out the scene in pairs. You could play the recording again and ask them note down key details. Ask them to think about what Oliver and the boy might say to each other when they first meet and when they are walking to London together.

## AUDIOSCRIPT

### (adapted and abridged from Chapter 8)

One day, Oliver decided to escape. He left the town during the night. After about five miles, he felt tired and decided to sit down and think about what to do next. He saw a stone that said that London was seventy miles away. This gave him an idea. Why not go to London? London was a big city and people said that it was a wonderful place. They said that a boy could find work there, so Oliver decided that London was the place for him. He jumped up and started walking in the direction of London.

He had all his things in one small bag: one shirt, two pairs of socks, a piece of bread and one penny. 'A clean shirt,' thought Oliver, 'is a very comfortable thing and two pairs of socks and a penny are useful too, but they aren't much help for walking sixty-five miles in winter.' He had no idea what he was going to do, so he just continued walking.

Oliver walked twenty miles that day and he only ate the piece of bread he had in his bag and drank a little water. That night, he slept in a field but he felt frightened. He was cold, hungry and alone but he was so tired after his walk that he fell asleep and forgot his troubles.

The next morning, he bought some bread from a shop with his penny before he continued his journey. He had no money now so he asked people to give him food, but lots of them refused. His feet hurt too and he was very tired from walking. Fortunately, he met some kind people: one day, a man gave him some bread and cheese and another day, an old woman gave him some of her food.

After walking for seven days, he arrived in a small town. He was tired and hungry and sat down in the street. After a while, he noticed a boy looking at him. The boy wore strange clothes and was dirty, but he was friendly. He sat next to Oliver and spoke to him. Oliver told him who he was and all about his journey. The boy lived in London and was on his way back there so he invited Oliver to walk with him. Before they started the walk to London, the boy bought some food and gave Oliver some of it. Oliver felt happier now that he had a friend and was near the end of his long journey.

## WRITING: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

9 Read the instruction. Ask students to say which character they find the most interesting and why. Then read through the *Writing* skills box. Look at the first bullet point with the class and ask them to underline the key information in the text. Students can write the character analysis in class or for homework. Students then swap their character analysis with a partner. They read each other's work and highlight any mistakes. They then return the character analysis to the original student who looks at the highlighted mistakes and corrects them. Ask some students to read their character analysis out loud to the class.

## THINK CHARACTERISATION

10 Read through the introduction and check that students understand the meaning of *comic* and *tragic*. Ask them to think about a book they have read or a film they have watched recently and to make a list of comic and tragic characters. Ask them to discuss their ideas in a group. Students then look at the pictures of Oliver and the other orphans and describe the scene using a range of adjectives (cold, crowded, sad, miserable). Ask them to imagine what their lives were like. Ask individual students to share their ideas.

### Optional extension

Ask students to research one of the characters in the *Think* style box. Who are they? What is their role in the novel? Are they a tragic or a comic character? What is their personality like? Are they nice or nasty? Rude or polite?

### Additional reading or internet research topics

- Dickens and poverty
- *Oliver Twist* themes
- Orphanages in Britain in the 1830s
- The Poor Law of 1834