

OLIVER TWIST created for everyone aged six and over

Background to the Story

Oliver Twist is set 180 years ago, just before Victoria became Queen. London was very different to how it is today. Because you couldn't turn on a tap to get water, there was a lot of illness as people drank dirty water from pumps in the streets; homes were small and built very close together - and lots of people would share the same house - so when you got sick, lots of people would catch the illness (and there was no National Health Service in those days). Therefore people died much younger than they do today, and even a simple cold could be very serious.

There were a lot of very poor people too, so they couldn't afford to eat very well and many couldn't afford a place to live. As a result, especially in big cities like London, desperate people turned to crime, such as breaking into rich people's houses, or stealing from people in the street (called pickpocketing). The alternative for very poor people, or children who had no mum or dad, was to go into the workhouse. These were places where people could sleep and be fed basic meals, in exchange for carrying out simple - but often exhausting - jobs. People only went to the workhouse when they had no alternative as they were not nice places, and they were afraid that, once there, they would never be able to leave.

The Setting

Around the stage you will see gravestones reminding us that a lot of poor people died in those days. You will also see three large shipping containers, two on the ground and one lying across the top of them. The sides of these containers open and close to reveal scenes inside them.



This is how the set will look when you arrive

During the play you will see that the shipping containers are actually on a revolving stage, which turns as the performance moves from scene to scene.



This is how the set looks when it revolves and opens to reveal scenes.

REMEMBER, if you want to, you can clap to show that you are enjoying the play!

There are 8 actors and 1 boy (who plays Oliver). Keep an eye out on how the actors play lots of different characters; sometimes from the way they move, sometimes by changing their hairstyle or clothes; sometimes they may just turn their hat around!

PART 1

The play opens in a Workhouse and we see the inmates working very hard to earn their next meal; **the music builds as they do their work, and we hear a dog barking too. We also see smoke.** We see a small boy join the workers, only to have a box placed over him! We hear **Mr Bumble, Mrs Corney** and – **standing around the auditorium** – the Governors of the Workhouse (those who are in charge) talking about a boy who had dared to ask for more food. That boy is **Oliver Twist**. We hear how Oliver's mother, **Agnes**, died when she gave birth to him and, as the Workhouse authorities didn't know of any other family member, why he remained in the Workhouse. They are deciding what to do with the boy.



Mrs Corney and Mr Bumble with Oliver

They nearly sell him to a Chimneysweep, **who enters through the theatre** but, **after asking some adults in the audience**, decide to sell him to **Mr and Mrs Sowerberry**.

We hear some funeral drums; Mr and Mrs Sowerberry are undertakers - people who arrange the funerals of those who have died. **Noah and Charlotte**, who also work for the Sowerberrys, tease and bully Oliver about his mother, who then appears on stage as if in Oliver's imagination.

Upset by the bullying, Oliver runs away to London – and **he runs through the auditorium.**

When he arrives in London, Oliver meets **Jack Dawkins**, also known as **Dodger**. On hearing that Oliver is all alone, Jack tells him of a place he can stay. As Jack walks him through the streets of London, **green smoke (which is also a bit smelly) is released** onto the stage. When they arrive at Fagin's 'den', **there is a bit of a fight** when Jack refuses to give another boy, Charley, the password to enter. **The top container has opened and we see Fagin cooking sausages.** Fagin is introduced as a respectable man - he is offering Oliver a place to stay after all - however he isn't very nice; he runs a gang that goes out onto the streets to 'pickpocket', so that he can sell what they steal to make money for himself.

Nancy arrives at Fagin's 'den'. Although now an adult she used to work for Fagin when she was a child. Together Fagin, Nancy, Dodger and Charley teach Oliver how to pick pockets - but they make it into a game (**including a dance**), so that Oliver doesn't realise that what they're doing is wrong. However, as Oliver goes to bed, his mother appears to him in a dream, to warn him about his new 'friends'.



Mr and Mrs Sowerberry buy Oliver



Nancy



Miss Monks with Fagin

Just then, a mysterious woman, **Miss Monks** (who has been looking for Oliver) arrives. We discover the reason for her search: Oliver is Miss Monks' half-brother (they have the same father). We learn that their rich father had left her and her mother when she was a child, to run away with Agnes, Oliver's mother. Now their father is dead, it means that his inheritance would be shared between Miss Monks and Oliver – that is, if Oliver ever found out who he really was; Miss Monks wants to ensure that he never finds this out, and she pays Fagin to keep him in his gang and out of the way.

The next morning, Fagin sends Jack and Charley out to teach Oliver how to pick pockets for real. As they approach a well-dressed man, **Mr Brownlow**, who is visiting a bookstore, Oliver's mother appears again to warn him that what the boys are doing is wrong. Oliver stands back as Dodger and Charley demonstrate how to steal Mr Brownlow's wallet.

But the bookseller spots what is going on and shouts 'thief'. **More smoke blows across the stage** as Mr Brownlow turns around seeing only Oliver, and - even though he has done nothing wrong - Oliver is chased and arrested.

Oliver is taken to court and accused of robbery by the judge, **Mr Fang**, but the bookseller arrives just in time to report that it was other boys, not Oliver, who stole Mr Brownlow's wallet. Oliver starts to feel unwell so, to make amends for wrongly accusing him, Mr Brownlow offers him his home as a safe place to stay and recover. A friend of Mr Brownlow, **Mr Grimwig**, is suspicious about Oliver, but Mr Brownlow pays no attention.



Jack pickpocketing Mr Brownlow

Jack walks through the auditorium asking the audience if they have seen Oliver – and Bill Sikes also arrives through the theatre. Back at Fagin's den **there is a fight** as Miss Monks discovers that Oliver has disappeared - but Nancy had secretly followed Mr Brownlow and Oliver when they left the court, so she reveals his whereabouts. A plan is hatched to get him back.

Meanwhile, Miss Monks goes to meet with Mr Bumble and Mrs Corney at the workhouse, and gives them money so that they keep what they know of Oliver's background a secret. She also takes from Mrs Corney the only piece of evidence that proves who Oliver is...a locket.



Bill Sikes with Bullseye

A few days later, Oliver is feeling better and wants to thank Mr Brownlow for his kindness. He offers to return some books to the bookseller. As he leaves the house, **he is given some money and a balloon**, but Nancy, Jack and the worst of all the criminals, **Bill Sikes** - with his dog, **Bullseye** - are waiting for him outside. They grab Oliver and take him back to Fagin.

INTERVAL

This is a break in the performance which lasts for 20 minutes. You can either stay in your seat, or go out of the auditorium into the bar area. Ice creams are sold both in the auditorium and in the bar area. You can also take this opportunity to visit the toilet.

PART 2

When we return after the interval, we see Jack stealing from a Guard, who then chases him.

We then return to Fagin's den. **Fagin's gang make a lot of noise** as Oliver is returned to them. Bill Sikes is angry with Oliver, thinking that he may have told Mr Brownlow about them. When Bill tries to grab him, Nancy steps in to protect Oliver - which Bill doesn't like.



Mr Bumble asks Mrs Corney to marry him.

Meanwhile, Mr Bumble asks Mrs Corney to marry him, and Mrs Corney kisses him!

Miss Monks arrives at Fagin's den. She has already told Fagin of the house on a hill where there are lots of valuable things to steal. And Fagin tells her that he has sent Bill and Oliver to undertake the robbery – which Miss Monks is nervous about because there is a family connection at the house. But it is too late.

On arriving at the house on the hill, Oliver is forced through a small open window so that he can unlock the front door from inside. However, during the break-in, he disturbs the owners. As Bill escapes, **gunshots are fired and Oliver gets hit by accident**. Fortunately he isn't injured too badly.

Back at Mr Brownlow's house, Mr Bumble and Widow Corney arrive (**entering through the theatre**) in response to an advertisement that he has placed, asking for information that might help him to find Oliver.

Meanwhile, at the house on the hill, the butler has called the police to arrest Oliver. **Mrs Maylie**, who lives at the house with **Rose** (who she took in as a child some years ago) is suspicious of Oliver, but Rose takes pity on him, suggesting that Oliver hasn't actually committed any crime. Mrs Maylie though is nervous about keeping Oliver at their house, as he has revealed to them about Fagin, and some of what has happened to him in London. Oliver also tells them about Mr Brownlow, and how he longs to return to him. Rose decides to search for Mr Brownlow.

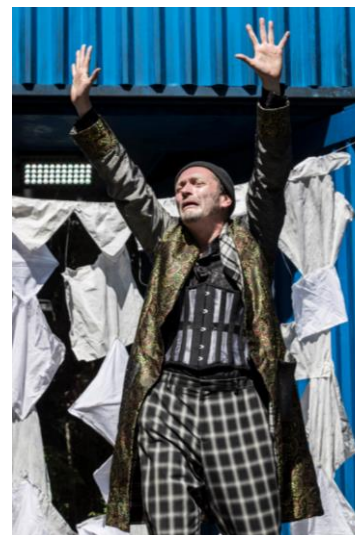
At Fagin's den, Miss Monks is annoyed that Oliver has not returned from the robbery, but Nancy asks for Oliver to be left alone, which makes Fagin doubt her - so he sends Jack out to follow her.

When Rose meets Mr Brownlow, Nancy intercepts them to warn them that Fagin and Miss Monks want Oliver back. But Jack hears everything! Later, Jack is arrested for pickpocketing, and Fagin has to go to the court to ask him about Nancy. From Jack's silence, Fagin believes that Nancy has betrayed them. **He tells Bill, who goes to murder her (although we don't actually see him do it)**.

We hear sirens, and there is music and a movement sequence as members of Fagin's gang are arrested (by invisible police) and, suspected of being involved in Nancy's death, Fagin is arrested too.

A lady selling cleaning products (guaranteed to remove fruit-stains, grass-stains and blood-stains), **enters through the audience**. She goes onto stage and up to Bill, and **we discover that she is actually the ghost of Nancy**.

Following Nancy's earlier revelation, Mr Brownlow decides to find Miss Monks - but upon meeting, she soon realises that he knows everything, and she runs off, chased by the police.



Fagin is arrested

Fearing that he will be caught too, Bill goes into hiding with Noah (who has now joined up with Fagin's gang) and he climbs up into one of the shipping containers. However, we hear loud barking as his dog, Bullseye, follows his master and, in turn, leads Brownlow and the police to Bill's new hideout. Bill is haunted by what he did to Nancy and, as her ghost appears to him, **she pushes him to his death** (which is suggested by Bill's hat and coat being dropped out of the shipping container).

Rose and Mrs Maylie arrive with Oliver, and he is reunited – at last - with Mr Brownlow.

Oliver discovers the secrets of his past. He learns that his mother, Agnes, was Rose's sister - making Rose, Oliver's aunt - and that his mother had run away with a married man when Rose was just a baby. This married man was Miss Monks' father, making Miss Monks Oliver's half-sister.

Mr Bumble and Mrs Corney are summoned. They claim not to know anything about his past but, knowing that they are lying, Mr Brownlow makes sure that they no longer hold positions of authority - and with justice served, they end up as workhouse inmates themselves.

THE END

The actors will take a bow to thank you for watching the play. You can clap, if you like, to show how much you enjoyed it. You will then leave the auditorium, and start your journey home.