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Charles John Huffam Dickens

(1812–1870) is one of the most popular writers in the history of world literature. He worked as a freelance journalist before he started to publish monthly sketches of daily life in London. Later he wrote several novels. In *Oliver Twist* (1839) Dickens combined masterful storytelling with sharp social criticism.

Word Power

workhouse – fattighus

Jew – jøde

mark – her: monogram

handkerchief – lommetørkle

pavement – fortau

J. Oliver Twist

by Charles Dickens

Oliver Twist was born in a workhouse. On the day he was born, his mother died. Nobody knew who his father was and Oliver grew up in the workhouse. When he was about ten years old, he ran away to London where he met a gang of boys who lived with an old Jew, Fagin.

Oliver is arrested

OLIVER STAYED IN the Jew's room for many days, picking the marks out of the handkerchiefs. But then he needed fresh air. He asked the Jew if he could go out to work with the other boys.

At last the Jew said yes, and Oliver went along with the Dodger and Charley Bates. Suddenly the Dodger stopped.

"What's the matter?" said Oliver.

"Hush!" answered the Dodger. "Do you see that old man at the bookshop?"

"Yes," said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"That's the man," said the Dodger, and he and Charley Bates walked quickly across the road. Oliver walked a few steps after them and then stopped. He did not know what to do.

The old gentleman was reading a book, so he did not see that the Dodger had put his hand into his pocket and taken out his handkerchief. The Dodger gave it to Charley Bates, and they both ran around the corner. Oliver was shocked. Now he understood why the Jew had so many silk handkerchiefs and watches. He was so afraid that he ran away as fast as he could.

Just then the old gentleman put his hand into his pocket. He could not find his handkerchief and turned round. When he saw Oliver running away, he thought that the boy was the thief. "Stop thief!" he shouted and ran after him.

Other people heard it and they also began running after Oliver, crying "Stop thief!"

A man stopped Oliver and hit him so that he fell to the pavement. "Where is the gentleman?"



"Here he is, coming down the street."

"Make room there for the gentleman!"

"Is this the boy, sir?"

"Yes," said the gentleman, "I am afraid it is. Poor boy! He has hurt himself." He seemed to look quite sorry that they had caught Oliver. Then a policeman came.

"Come on, get up!" he said to Oliver.

"It wasn't me, sir," said Oliver. "It was two other boys. They are here somewhere."

"Oh, no, they aren't," said the policeman. "Come on, get up!"

"Don't hurt him!" said the old gentleman.

"Oh no," answered the policeman. "Come, I know you. Will you stand on your feet, you young devil?"

The policeman took Oliver to the police station. The gentleman went with them and many boys followed.

Do you want to learn more about Oliver? On page 246 you can read what happened to him at the police station.

Word Power

hurt – skade

devil – djevil