

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

In England during the 1800s, many people came to the cities to work. There were places called workhouses where the poorest people could live, work and eat to make ends meet. But life in the workhouses was not easy, where people somehow managed a subsistence, living day-to-day, huddled together to keep warm.

One night, a woman arrived at a workhouse. She gave birth to a baby but then sadly died. A nurse called the baby Oliver Twist and he was sent to a house for orphans until he was nine. Then he was sent to a workhouse to work. Oliver was sad to leave the other orphans. Although the boys lived hand-to-mouth, they had a sense of belonging at the house and looked after each other.

At the workhouse, all the other boys were as malnourished as Oliver. One day, they encouraged Oliver to beg for more food, but this made the managers of the workhouse angry.

Oliver decided to escape to London but had no food and went hungry for days, before he met another boy called Jack Dawkins. He showed Oliver the way to the city. Jack introduced Oliver to an old man called Fagin, who gave Oliver some food and a bed to sleep on. The next day, Oliver saw many other boys come to Fagin's house. The boys gathered together to give the old man watches and jewellery. Fagin then told Oliver to go into the streets with the other boys and learn from them. Oliver was shocked when he saw the boys take things from people's pockets. He understood that they were thieves!

Suddenly, a man saw the boys take a handkerchief from his pocket. He shouted at the boys, and as they ran away, a police officer tried to



arrest Oliver. But a man, Mr Brownlow, told the police officer that Oliver had not taken anything. Mr Brownlow was worried about the skinny boy and took him back to his house, where the housekeeper looked after Oliver.

When Oliver was better, he was walking along the streets when a woman grabbed him. She took him back to Fagin's. Fagin then asked Oliver to help Mr Sikes with a job in the country. They told Oliver to climb through a small window of a house. When he did so, he was shot.

Luckily, he survived. When he was better, he was taken to Mr Brownlow, and was made to feel at home. Mr Brownlow explained that Oliver's mother was a rich woman. But his brother, a man called Monks, knew that Oliver would only get the money if Oliver was an honest person. So, he watched Oliver and made sure that he met Jack Dawkins, and then Fagin. In this way, Oliver would never be honest and Monks could keep all the money.

1. Why were workhouses a refuge for poor people who came to cities in England during the nineteenth century?
2. Quote the sentence that shows that life in shelters and workhouses was very harsh and unbearable.
3. The life of the poor in shelters and workhouses was not easy. Mention three examples that confirm this?
4. What was the reason that made Oliver sad to leave the other orphans even though he was living on subsistence?
5. What made the workhouse managers angry with Oliver?
6. Who showed Oliver the way to the city?

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7. Was old man Fagin, who gave Oliver some food and a bed to sleep in, a generous and kind man?
8. Why was Oliver shocked when he saw the boys taking things out of people's pockets?
9. How was Oliver acquitted of robbing Mr. Brownlow? Why didn't the police officer arrest Oliver?
10. Why did Mr. Brownlow tell the police officer that Oliver had not taken anything?
11. Find a word in the text which means "a person whose job is to look after a house"
12. When Oliver returned to Mr. Fagin's house the second time. What did he ask Oliver?
13. What did Mr. Sikes ask Oliver to do? What happened next?

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Answers:

1. Why were workhouses a refuge for poor people who came to cities in England during the nineteenth century?

Because in these workhouses the poorest people could live, work and eat to make ends meet.

2. Quote the sentence that shows that life in shelters and workhouses was very harsh and unbearable.

"But life in the workhouses was not easy, where people somehow managed a subsistence, living day-to-day, huddled together to keep warm."

3. The life of the poor in shelters and workhouses was not easy. Mention three examples that confirm this?

People somehow managed a subsistence, living day-to-day, huddled together to keep warm.

4. What was the reason that made Oliver sad to leave the other orphans even though he was living on subsistence?

Because he had a sense of belonging at the house and the orphans looked after each other.

5. What made the workhouse managers angry with Oliver?

When Oliver begged for more food.

6. Who showed Oliver the way to the city?

A boy called Jack Dawkins.

7. Was old man Fagin, who gave Oliver some food and a bed to sleep in, a generous and kind man?

Of course, no. He wanted Oliver to trust him and then work for him by robbing people.

8. Why was Oliver shocked when he saw the boys taking things out of people's pockets?

Because he understood that they were thieves.

9. How was Oliver acquitted of robbing Mr. Brownlow? Why didn't the police officer arrest Oliver?

Mr Brownlow, told the police officer that Oliver had not taken anything.

10. Why did Mr. Brownlow tell the police officer that Oliver had not taken anything?

Because he was worried about the skinny boy and took him back to his house, where the housekeeper looked after Oliver.

11. Find a word in the text which means "a person whose job is to look after a house"

A housekeeper.

12. When Oliver returned to Mr. Fagin's house the second time. What did he ask Oliver?

Fagin then asked Oliver to help Mr Sikes with a job in the country.

13. What did Mr. Sikes ask Oliver to do? What happened next?

They told Oliver to climb through a small window of a house. When he did so, he was shot.

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