

Oliver Twist

Charles Dickens

LEVEL 3



WORDS USED

Story 71 Story 72 Story 73 Story 74 Story 75

KEY WORDS

| | | | | |
|----------|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| astonish | age | dirt | brush | against |
| bowl | beg | half | healthy | husband |
| doctor | cellar | judge | laid | lying |
| pleasant | downstairs | several | pillow | planned |
| spoon | lazy | sparkle | tight | rich |
| sweep | paid | thief | wipe | we're |

NECESSARY WORDS

| | | | | |
|--------|---------|--------------|-----|-------------|
| born | beat | awake | God | gun |
| cereal | funeral | blood | | information |
| charge | sir | bookstore | | niece |
| dead | | court | | reward |
| die | | handkerchief | | robbery |
| job | | knife | | servant |
| owner | | officer | | shot |
| | | pocketbook | | |
| | | rob/robbed | | |

Young Oliver



Oliver is born. But he will never get to know his mother.

Preview:

1. Read the name of the story.
2. Look at the picture.
3. Read the sentences under the picture.
4. Read the first three paragraphs of the story.
5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that people who lived in a workhouse were

- a. sick.
- b. young.
- c. poor.
- d. happy.

Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.

Now read the story.

Read to find out about young Oliver's hard life.

Young Oliver

Long ago in England there was a workhouse in most every town. Poor people, who had no place to go, lived in a workhouse. But they did not live for *free*. That's why it was called a workhouse. They would eat and sleep at the workhouse. But they went to work outside the workhouse. The little money they made went to the workhouse to help pay for their food. And when children were old enough, they went to work, too!

One night at the workhouse, Oliver Twist was born. His mother sat up. "Let me see my baby, then I will die," she said.

"Oh, you must not talk about wanting to die," said the doctor. But Oliver's mother patted her baby, then fell back and died.

"Too bad," said the doctor. "Who was she, anyway?"

"No one knows," the doctor's helper answered. "She fell in the street outside. Her baby was ready to be born. We do not know her name, or where she came from."

Little Oliver's early years were hard. He and the other children at the workhouse had little to eat. Mrs. Mann, the woman in charge, was mean to the children. She hit them often...and liked doing it! And she took the children's food money to spend on herself! So little Oliver went hungry most of the time.

Sometimes Mr. Bumble came to see the children. It was his job to see that the children were being cared for. It was his job to tell the owners how the children were doing. But like Mrs. Mann, he did not like children. So he didn't do his job real well.

"How are the children getting along?" he asked Mrs. Mann, one day.

"Oh, the children are so dear," Mrs. Mann said, in a pleasant way. "I love them all so much."

Mr. Bumble just looked around and smiled. He never talked with the children to see how they were *really* doing. He was happy just to hear a good word. Then he could hurry out of there. But as soon as he would leave, Mrs. Mann would put on her mean face again.

For many years, Oliver worked hard at the workhouse. His friends worked hard, too. The boys had little time for fun and games. And all their hard work made them *very* hungry. But all they were given was a little cooked cereal to eat. The boys would eat all the cereal in their bowls. But always, the boys were hungry and wanted more. One day the boys told Oliver, "You go ask for some more cereal."

Oliver took his bowl and spoon and went to the cook. "Please, I would like some more," he said.

The cook got very angry. "You astonish me!" he said. "It is a *terrible* thing to ask for more of *anything!*" He picked up a big, long spoon and hit Oliver with it. Then he shouted for Mr. Bumble.

Mr. Bumble came running into the kitchen. He was astonished at the terrible thing Oliver had asked of the cook. Mr. Bumble ran to tell the owners.

"Oliver has asked for more cereal," Mr. Bumble told the owners.

"What?" said one of the men, as he brought his hand down and hit the table. "He *knows* he should not have asked for more. He already *had* his cereal!" The man was not at all pleasant. Mr. Bumble became a little frightened.

Mr. Bumble locked Oliver in a dark room all alone. Every other day he took Oliver into the room where the other boys ate. In front of the boys, he hit Oliver again and again. This was to let the boys know they must not ask for more of *anything!*

One day Mr. Bumble put a sign outside on the gate: **BOY LOOKING FOR WORK.** Mr. Bumble wanted to get Oliver out of his hair. And a job outside would do just that!

First, a chimney sweep stopped in. He wanted Oliver to sweep the inside of chimneys. This man did not care about the boys who worked for him. Sometimes, he let them burn in the chimneys. But the men at the workhouse would not let Oliver sweep chimneys. So Mr. Bumble put another sign outside: **HARD-WORKING BOY LOOKING FOR WORK.**

This time, Mr. Sowerberry saw the sign. He made boxes to hold dead people. He needed someone to help him in his shop. So he took Oliver with him to live and work.

At his new home, Mrs. Sowerberry looked Oliver over. She was not a pleasant woman. "He's *very* small for his nine years," she said to Mr. Sowerberry.

"But he will grow, my dear," he answered.

"Yes, he will," Mrs. Sowerberry said, in a cross voice. "He'll grow on *our* food and drink! Come here, Oliver, you little bag of bones. You can have the pieces of food we give our dog."

Oliver was so hungry that he ate every last bite. Mrs. Sowerberry's face looked more cross than before. *This boy will eat us right into the poor house,* she thought to herself.

Mrs. Sowerberry took Oliver next door to Mr. Sowerberry's shop. "You can sleep by the boxes we use for dead people," she said. And smiling, she left the shop.

Oliver looked around the shop. He was afraid. And he felt so alone. Little Oliver sat down and cried himself to sleep.

Young Oliver

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. Oliver's mother died when Oliver
 - a. was three years' old.
 - b. was two days' old.
 - c. went to work.
 - d. was born.

2. The people who ran the workhouse
 - a. were kind to the children.
 - b. were mean to the children.
 - c. never hit the children.
 - d. made the children happy.

3. Why were the boys at the workhouse always hungry?
 - a. Mrs. Mann was spending the food money on herself.
 - b. Mr. Bumble was taking all the food money.
 - c. The owners were taking all the food money.
 - d. They wouldn't eat the cook's food.

4. Growing up in the workhouse
 - a. was fun for the boys.
 - b. was hard on the boys.
 - c. would make the boys strong.
 - d. made the boys feel lucky.

5. It was Mr. Bumble's job
 - a. to keep the owners happy.
 - b. to put the children to work.
 - c. to see that the children were being cared for.
 - d. to do the food shopping.

6. Oliver got into trouble when he
 - a. told the cook to take a day off.
 - b. asked the cook for a second helping.
 - c. asked Mrs. Mann if he could play a game.
 - d. had a fight with another boy.

7. First, Oliver asked the cook for some more cereal. Then, the cook shouted for Mr. Bumble. Next,
 - a. Mr. Bumble locked Oliver in a dark room.
 - b. Mr. Bumble hit Oliver.
 - c. Oliver was sent to live with the Sowerberrys.
 - d. Mr. Bumble ran to tell the owners what Oliver had done.

8. Oliver felt afraid and all alone at the Sowerberrys. He missed
 - a. Mrs. Mann.
 - b. Mr. Bumble.
 - c. his friends.
 - d. his mother.

9. Another name for this story could be
 - a. "More, Please."
 - b. "Growing Up in a Workhouse."
 - c. "A Little Bag of Bones."
 - d. "Off to Work."

10. This story is mainly about
 - a. how the poor people of England lived.
 - b. a young boy growing up without his family.
 - c. a young boy who never got enough to eat.
 - d. a nine-year-old boy who got a job.

Preview Answer:

c. poor.

Check your answers with the key on page 67.