

Oliver Twist's Childhood

Adapted from the book *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens

- 1 When his mother died, leaving Oliver as an orphaned baby, the parish generously decided to 'farm' him out. In other words, he would be sent to a 'baby-farm' where twenty or thirty other villains – who were as guilty as Oliver of the crime of poverty – rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing.
- 6 The culprits at the baby-farm were looked after by an elderly woman for the princely sum of sevenpence-halfpenny per week. Sevenpence-halfpenny each week, said the parish, is enough to provide food for a child. Mrs Mann, who was a woman of wisdom and experience, felt that sevenpence-halfpenny would buy so much food it might make a child ill; she knew what was good for children! She kindly kept most of the money and managed to raise her young crop of orphans on even less than the parish provided for them.
- 14 It cannot be expected that this system of farming would produce any very extraordinary or luxuriant crop. Oliver Twist's ninth birthday found him a small, thin child. He was celebrating his birthday in the coal-cellar with two other young gentlemen, with whom he had been locked up for daring to be hungry.
- 19 Mrs Mann, the good lady of the house, glanced up and saw Mr Bumble, who looked after the workhouse, marching up the path.
- 21 "Goodness gracious! Is that you, Mr Bumble, sir?" said Mrs Mann, thrusting her head out of the window. "(Susan, take Oliver and them two other brats upstairs, and wash 'em directly.) Well Mr Bumble, how glad I am to see you!"
- 25 Mrs Mann showed the beadle into a small parlour with a brick floor. "I am here on business, Mrs Mann," he declared. "The boy, Oliver Twist, is nine years old today and is therefore too old to remain here. So we have decided to put him to work back at the workhouse. The parish has already been generous enough to him and now it is time for him to pay it back. Let me see him at once."
- 31 "I'll fetch him directly," said Mrs Mann. Oliver, having had his skin rubbed raw, was led back into the room by his kindly protectress.

Challenge 3

1 Why was Oliver sent to a baby-farm?

2 In this text, what do you think the "baby-farm" was? Tick **one**.

a farm where babies were grown

a building where people went to choose a baby to adopt

a building where orphaned babies were allowed to grow up

a health farm where people went to have their babies

3 "She kindly kept most of the money and managed to raise her young crop of orphans on even less than the parish provided for them."

Do you think it was kind of her? Explain your answer.

4 Do you think Oliver was happy at the baby-farm? Explain your answer fully using ideas from the text.

5 List **two** things that happened to Oliver on his ninth birthday.

6 "Goodness gracious! Is that you, Mr Bumble, sir?" said Mrs Mann, thrusting her head out of the window. "(Susan, take Oliver and them two other brats upstairs, and wash 'em directly.) Well Mr Bumble, how glad I am to see you!" (paragraph 5)

Why did the author use brackets in direct speech?

7 Why do you think Mrs Mann wants Oliver and the other two boys to be taken out of the cellar?

8 Based on what you have read so far, tick the statement that is the best prediction of what happens just after Oliver is taken to see Mr Bumble. Tick **one**.

He is adopted by a loving family.

He is taken to a workhouse, where he is treated even more cruelly.

Mr Bumble is angry with Mrs Mann because Oliver is so thin.

Mr Bumble likes Oliver and takes him home with him.

9 This story was originally written over 100 years ago. List **two** ideas from the text that show it is not set in the 21st century.

2b

1 mark

2a

1 mark

2d

1 mark

2d

1 mark

2b

1 mark

2f

1 mark

2d

1 mark

2e

1 mark

2f

Write the question number and then answer the questions:

Answers: