Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens *(Chapter 1)*
November test 2022

In a large, cold workhouse in a town in England a boy named Oliver Twist was born. He was brought into a world of sorrow and trouble by a local surgeon and nurse. It seemed doubtful that he would live very long as he initially struggled to breathe, gasping for breath on a little mattress. After a few struggles, Oliver breathed, sneezed, and screamed to let all the other inmates of the workhouse know that he had arrived. The pale face of a young woman raised feebly from the pillow, and a faint voice said, "Let me see the child, and die."
The surgeon had been sitting with his face turned towards the fire, giving the palms of his hands a warm and a rub. As the young woman spoke, he rose, advanced to the bed and said, in a surprisingly kind tone, "Oh, you must not talk about dying yet." The patient shook her head and stretched out her hand towards the child. The surgeon deposited the baby in her arms. She imprinted her cold white lips passionately on its forehead, passed her hands over her face, gazed wildly round, shuddered, fell back and died.

"Poor dear!" said the nurse, "She came here last night. No one knows where she's from." She wrapped Oliver in an old blanket. He was an orphan of a workhouse, alone in the world, despised by all and pitied by none.

During the early years of his childhood, Oliver was brought up in an orphanage that had connections with the workhouse. The orphanage owner, Mrs. Mann, was a very unkind woman who did not care about the orphans. The conditions were appalling. The children were barely considered and were always left hungry. The orphanage was filthy and dangerous and many of the children died from cold, lack of food or neglect. By his ninth birthday, Oliver Twist was a pale, thin child, much smaller than he should be. Despite this, he had a good sturdy spirit.

On his ninth birthday, the orphanage had a surprise visit from Mr. Bumble, much to the dismay of Mrs. Mann. Mr. Bumble was a fat community official who had an air of importance around him that forced everyone to obey his wishes. He met with Mrs. Mann and declared "Oliver Twist is now too old to remain here, so the community board has decided to bring him back to the workhouse. I have come out myself to take him there. So, let me see him at once."

"I'll fetch him directly," said Mrs. Mann, leaving the room. Not long after, Oliver was led into the room. "Bow to the gentleman, Oliver," instructed Mrs. Mann. Oliver bowed immediately.

"Will you go along with me, Oliver?" asked Mr. Bumble grandly. Oliver told him that he would.
With a slice of bread in his hand, and a little brown cloth cap on his head, Oliver was then led away by Mr. Bumble from the wretched orphanage where he had spent his gloomy infant years. And yet he burst with an agony of childish grief as the gate closed after him. He was leaving behind his home and the only friends he had ever known, and a sense of his loneliness in the great wide world sank into his heart for the first time.

In the workhouse, Oliver soon learned that the workers were issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays. The room in which the boys were fed was a large stone hall, with a copper pot at one end, out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, with one or two assistants, served the gruel at mealtimes. Oliver and his companions were very hungry, but they never asked for a second bowl of gruel.

After three months, Oliver was truly in need of a second helping of the awful gruel to avoid starvation. He was miserable and desperate with hunger. He rose from the table, and advanced to the master, bowl and spoon in hand, said "Please, sir, I want some more." The master was a fat, healthy man but he turned very pale. He gazed in astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper pot. The assistants were paralyzed with wonder; the rest of the boys were paralyzed with fear.
"What!" gasped the master in a faint voice.
"Please, sir," repeated Oliver, "I want some more."
The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the spoon, hit his arm, and shrieked aloud for Mr. Bumble to come to deal with Oliver Twist. Mr. Bumble did not know what to do so he brought the issue to the workhouse board for advice. An animated discussion took place. Oliver was ordered to stay in a small room away from everyone else and an advert was hung on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the workhouse. Oliver was left in confinement for a week. He cried bitterly all day, and when the long, dismal night came, he spread his little hands before his eyes to shut out the darkness, and curled up in the corner, trying to sleep. The cold, hard walls were protection in the gloom and loneliness which surrounded him.

One morning, Mr. Gamfield, a chimney sweep, was passing the workhouse and noticed the advert on the gate. He did a quick calculation of the amount of money he was in debt for and realized that the five pounds being offered for Oliver would solve all his problems. He approached the

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workhouse and asked if he could take the boy to be his apprentice. He did not care that the work could kill Oliver, he was only thinking of the money. Mr. Bumble did not care about Oliver's well-being and so he agreed that Mr. Gamfield could have Oliver, depending on whether the deal was approved by a judge.

Oliver was cleaned up and given a clean shirt to wear as well as a bowl of gruel and an unusual allowance of bread for his appearance before the judge. Mr. Bumble gave him strict instructions to behave and to agree with everything that he was going to say. It was the critical moment of Oliver's fate. It almost seemed he was to be a chimney-sweep apprentice, no doubt meeting death in one of the chimneys, but the kind judge looked at Oliver and recognized that he was terrified by the idea. He asked Oliver why he looked so pale and distressed. Oliver told him that he would much rather go back to the workhouse to starve or be beaten than to go work for the horrible chimney- sweep. With that, the judge refused to approve the deal and ordered that Oliver be taken back to the workhouse. The next morning, the public were once again informed that five pounds would be paid to anybody who would take possession of Oliver Twist.

That night was cold, dark and dreary. Oliver looked out the window of the room he had been sleeping in. The stars seemed farther from the earth than he had ever seen them before. There was no wind and the shadows thrown by the trees upon the ground looked death-like, from being so still. He softly opened the door of the room. He used the expiring light of a candle to tie the few items of clothing he had in a handkerchief and sat down on a bench to wait for morning. With the first ray of light that struggled through the cracks in the shutters, Oliver arose and opened the front door of the workhouse. After one timid look around – and a moment's pause of hesitation -he closed it behind him and was in the open street. He looked to the right and to the left, uncertain whether he should leave.

He remembered seeing wagons toiling up the hill. He took the same route and walked quickly. His heart beat rapidly when he thought of the trouble he would get in if he was caught, and he half decided to turn back. He had come a long way though, so he decided to continue on his way. Besides, it was so early that there was very little fear of being seen, so, he walked on. When he was nearly five miles away from the town, he heard someone coming along the road. He ran and hid behind hedges, fearing that he might have been followed and be taken back to the workhouse. Then he sat down to rest by the side of a wall, and began to think – for the first time – where he had better go and try to live.

The wall he sat on had large characters painted on it, showing that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy's mind. London! That great place! Nobody, not even Mr. Bumble, could ever find him there! He had often heard the old men in the workhouse say that no lad of spirit wanted for anything in London, and that there were ways of living in that vast city, which those who had grown up in the country had no idea of. It was the very place for a homeless boy, who would die in the streets unless someone helped him. As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped upon his feet, and again walked forward. In the workhouse, Oliver soon learned that the workers were issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll on Sundays. The room in which the boys were fed was a large stone hall, with a copper pot at one end, out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, with one or two assistants, served the gruel at mealtimes. Oliver and his companions were very hungry, but they never asked for a second bowl of gruel.

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1. **Which choice best summarizes the passage?**
    a. Largely as a result of the circumstances of his birth, a character leads a difficult life.
    b. An uncaring official disciplines a character because he does not understand him.
    c. A character who is barely surviving under difficult living conditions, asks for relief and is punished for it.

2. **In lines 38-39, it states that "Oliver and his companions were very hungry, but they never asked for a second bowl of gruel." Why do you think this is?**

    a. They were told they are not allowed a second bowl.
    b. They are afraid to ask for a second bowl.
    c. They don't like the taste of the gruel.

3. **In line 46, "faint" most nearly means**
    a. pale.
    b. hazy.
    c. weak.

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4. **Which choice best describes the master, Mr. Bumble and the workhouse board's reaction to Oliver asking for more food?**
   a. They thought calmly about why Oliver acted the way he did and made an appropriate decision.
   b. They were excessively shocked and surprised, and made an unjust decision.
   c. They argued about what to do and made a questionable decision.

5. **In the last paragraph of the passage, the author includes the descriptions of Oliver's confinement, the walls, his small hands, and his tears primarily to…**

   a. emphasize the cold and harsh treatment of a character.
   b. foreshadow what will happen to a character.
   c. offer an idea of how important childhood is.

Writing:

Think about how characters are presented in **Chapter 1**

Using the graphic organizer, note down details from the text for each character, and your personal response to each one.

Character	Details from the text	What I think about them
Mrs. Mann Mr. Bumble Workhouse Master Mr. Gamfield The judge		

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