Year 7 English - Oliver Twist

Key Vocabulary

Tier 2	Definition
Vulnerable	Easily harmed or hurt by others
Exploit	To unfairly take advantage of someone
Corrupt	Dishonest. Abusing power
Malicious	Deliberately cruel
Compassion	Showing care and concern for others

Tier 3	Definition
Workhouse	A place where poor people lived and worked
Poor Law	Victorian laws dealing with poverty
Pickpocket	A thief who steals from people's pockets
Slums	Overcrowded areas of poor housing

Key Concepts

Themes

Poverty and Inequality
Dickens exposes the suffering of poor people in Victorian London.
Power and Corruption
Characters misuse power to control vulnerable people.
Crime and Punishment
The novel explores criminal life and harsh Victorian punishments.
Kindness and Compassion
Characters such as Nancy show courage and kindness despite difficult circumstances.
Justice
The novel suggests that wrongdoing should ultimately be punished and good people protected.

Context

Victorian Society
- The Victorian period lasted from 1837 - 1901
- Victorian Britain contained huge differences between rich and poor.
- Poor children often faced hunger, disease and neglect.
- The Poor Law led many people to live in workhouses.
- Dickens highlights the unfair treatment of vulnerable people.
- Punishments for crimes were very harsh in Victorian London and children could be punished the same way as adults.

Responding Analytically – What / How / Why

What – what do I learn about this character / theme?

How – how does the writer show me this? Find a relevant piece of evidence to support your ideas

Why – why does the writer choose to use this word / phrase / technique? What does it make me think / imagine / feel? What are the connotations of this?

Assessment Support / Top Tips

Analysing Characters
- ✅ Write a clear topic sentence.
- ✅ Use short quotations as evidence.
- ✅ Explain what the quotation shows.
- ✅ Use conjunctions such as:
  - because
  - but
  - so
- ✅ Link ideas back to the question.

Key Characters

Oliver Twist
Vulnerable orphan
Innocent and kind-hearted
Represents hope and resilience

Mr Bumble
Beadle of the workhouse
Abuses his authority
Symbolises the failures of the Poor Law

Mrs Bumble
Corrupt and selfish
Exploits vulnerable children

Artful Dodger
Skilled pickpocket
Introduces Oliver to criminal life

Fagin
Criminal leader
Exploits vulnerable children

Bill Sikes
Violent criminal
Uses fear and intimidation

Nancy
Compassionate and brave
Risks her life to help Oliver

Noah Claypole
Bully who mistreats Oliver

Big Questions ❓

What was life like for poor children in Victorian Britain? 🥣

How does Dickens present injustice in society? ⚖️ 🚫

How do powerful people exploit vulnerable characters? 💰

Why is Oliver presented as different from those around him? 👤≠👥

What does Nancy teach us about courage and compassion? ❤️

How does Dickens build tension and suspense? 🌩️ ⚠️

What does the locket symbolise? 🔒

What moral lessons does Dickens want readers to learn? 🌟

How does Oliver's journey reveal ideas about identity and belonging? 🔒

Why is Oliver Twist still relevant today? 💭

Oliver Twist Plot - Visuals

1️⃣ Workhouse 🏚️ Oliver is born in a Victorian workhouse and experiences poverty from the start.
2️⃣ "Please Sir..." 🥣 Oliver asks for more food, revealing the cruelty of the workhouse system.
3️⃣ Escape 🏃 Oliver runs away from abuse and travels to London.
4️⃣ Criminal London 🕴️ Oliver meets the Artful Dodger and is introduced to Fagin's gang.
5️⃣ Exploitation 💰 Fagin exploits vulnerable children by training them to steal.
6️⃣ Safety 🏠 Mr Brownlow offers Oliver kindness and protection.
7️⃣ Danger 🔫 Bill Sikes uses violence and fear to control others.
8️⃣ Courage ❤️ Nancy risks her own safety to help Oliver escape.
9️⃣ Identity 🔒 The locket helps reveal Oliver's true identity and family history.
🔟 Justice ⚖️ Criminals are punished, and Oliver finally finds belonging and security. The novel's moral message focuses on justice, kindness and protecting vulnerable people

Respect Compassion Challenge Belong Faith

"You can perform miracles by touching the hearts of those entrusted to your care."