

English

Lesson 3: Oliver Heads to London

Oliver Learns the Trade

Mr Johnston



It was late next morning when Oliver awoke, from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room but the old Jew, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round, with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the least noise below: and when he had satisfied himself, he would go on whistling and stirring again, as before.

(Oliver) saw the Jew with his half-closed eyes; heard his low whistling; and recognised the sound of the spoon grating against the saucepan's sides: and yet the self-same senses were mentally engaged, at the same time, in busy action with almost everybody he had ever known.

When the coffee was done, the Jew drew the saucepan to the hob. Standing, then in an irresolute attitude for a few minutes, as if he did not well know how to employ himself, he turned round and looked at Oliver, and called him by his name. He did not answer, and was to all appearances asleep.



After satisfying himself upon this head, the Jew stepped gently to the door: which he fastened. He then drew forth: as it seemed to Oliver, from some trap in the floor: a small box, which he placed carefully on the table. His eyes glistened as he raised the lid, and looked in. Dragging an old chair to the table, he sat down; and took from it a magnificent gold watch, sparkling with jewels.

‘Aha!’ said the Jew, shrugging up his shoulders, and distorting every feature with a hideous grin. ‘Clever dogs! Clever dogs! Staunch to the last! Never told the old parson where they were. Never poached upon old Fagin! And why should they? It wouldn’t have loosened the knot, or kept the drop up, a minute longer. No, no, no! Fine fellows! Fine fellows!’

With these, and other muttered reflections of the like nature, the Jew once more deposited the watch in its place of safety. At least half a dozen more were severally drawn forth from the same box, and surveyed with equal pleasure; besides rings, brooches, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery, of such magnificent materials, and costly workmanship, that Oliver had no idea, even of their names.



Having replaced these trinkets, the Jew took out another: so small that it lay in the palm of his hand. There seemed to be some very minute inscription on it; for the Jew laid it flat upon the table, and shading it with his hand, pored over it, long and earnestly. At length he put it down, as if despairing of success; and, leaning back in his chair, muttered:

‘What a fine thing capital punishment is! Dead men never repent; dead men never bring awkward stories to light. Ah, it’s a fine thing for the trade! Five of ‘em strung up in a row, and none left to play booty, or turn white-livered!’

As the Jew uttered these words, his bright dark eyes, which had been staring vacantly before him, fell on Oliver’s face; the boy’s eyes were fixed on his in mute curiosity; and although the recognition was only for an instant—for the briefest space of time that can possibly be conceived—it was enough to show the old man that he had been observed.

He closed the lid of the box with a loud crash; and, laying his hand on a bread knife which was on the table, started furiously up. He trembled very much though; for, even in his terror, Oliver could see that the knife quivered in the air.



‘What’s that?’ said the Jew. ‘What do you watch me for? Why are you awake? What have you seen? Speak out, boy! Quick—quick! for your life.’

‘I wasn’t able to sleep any longer, sir,’ replied Oliver, meekly. ‘I am very sorry if I have disturbed you, sir.’

‘You were not awake an hour ago?’ said the Jew, scowling fiercely on the boy.

‘No! No, indeed!’ replied Oliver.

‘Are you sure?’ cried the Jew: with a still fiercer look than before: and a threatening attitude.

‘Upon my word I was not, sir,’ replied Oliver, earnestly. ‘I was not, indeed, sir.’

‘Tush, tush, my dear!’ said the Jew, abruptly resuming his old manner, and playing with the knife a little, before he laid it down; as if to induce the belief that he had caught it up, in mere sport.



‘Of course I know that, my dear. I only tried to frighten you. You’re a brave boy. Ha! ha! you’re a brave boy, Oliver.’ The Jew rubbed his hands with a chuckle, but glanced uneasily at the box, notwithstanding.

‘Did you see any of these pretty things, my dear?’ said the Jew, laying his hand upon it after a short pause.

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Oliver.

‘Ah!’ said the Jew, turning rather pale. ‘They—they’re mine, Oliver; my little property. All I have to live upon, in my old age. The folks call me a miser, my dear. Only a miser; that’s all.’

Oliver thought the old gentleman must be a decided miser to live in such a dirty place, with so many watches; but, thinking that perhaps his fondness for the Dodger and the other boys, cost him a good deal of money, he only cast a deferential look at the Jew, and asked if he might get up.



‘Certainly, my dear, certainly,’ replied the old gentleman. ‘Stay. There’s a pitcher of water in the corner by the door. Bring it here; and I’ll give you a basin to wash in, my dear.’

Oliver got up; walked across the room; and stooped for an instant to raise the pitcher. When he turned his head, the box was gone.

He had scarcely washed himself, and made everything tidy, by emptying the basin out of the window, agreeably to the Jew’s directions, when the Dodger returned: accompanied by a very sprightly young friend, whom Oliver had seen smoking on the previous night, and who was now formally introduced to him as Charley Bates. The four sat down, to breakfast, on the coffee, and some hot rolls and ham which the Dodger had brought home in the crown of his hat.

‘Well,’ said the Jew, glancing slyly at Oliver, and addressing himself to the Dodger, ‘I hope you’ve been at work this morning, my dears?’



‘Hard,’ replied the Dodger.

‘As nails,’ added Charley Bates.

‘Good boys, good boys!’ said the Jew. ‘What have you got, Dodger?’

‘A couple of pocket-books,’ replied that young gentleman.

‘Lined?’ inquired the Jew, with eagerness.

‘Pretty well,’ replied the Dodger, producing two pocket-books; one green, and the other red.

‘Not so heavy as they might be,’ said the Jew, after looking at the insides carefully; ‘but very neat and nicely made. Ingenious workman, ain’t he, Oliver?’



‘Very indeed, sir,’ said Oliver. At which Mr. Charles Bates laughed uproariously; very much to the amazement of Oliver, who saw nothing to laugh at, in anything that had passed.

‘And what have you got, my dear?’ said Fagin to Charley Bates.

‘Wipes,’ replied Master Bates; at the same time producing four pocket-handkerchiefs.

‘Well,’ said the Jew, inspecting them closely; ‘they’re very good ones, very. You haven’t marked them well, though, Charley; so the marks shall be picked out with a needle, and we’ll teach Oliver how to do it. Shall us, Oliver, eh? Ha! ha! Ha!’

‘If you please, sir,’ said Oliver.

‘You’d like to be able to make pocket-handkerchiefs as easy as Charley Bates, wouldn’t you, my dear?’ said the Jew.



‘Very much, indeed, if you’ll teach me, sir,’ replied Oliver.

Master Bates saw something so exquisitely ludicrous in this reply, that he burst into another laugh; which laugh, meeting the coffee he was drinking, and carrying it down some wrong channel, very nearly terminated in his premature suffocation.

‘He is so jolly green!’ said Charley when he recovered, as an apology to the company for his unpolite behaviour.

The Dodger said nothing, but he smoothed Oliver’s hair over his eyes, and said he’d know better, by and by; upon which the old gentleman, observing Oliver’s colour mounting, changed the subject by asking whether there had been much of a crowd at the execution that morning? This made him wonder more and more; for it was plain from the replies of the two boys that they had both been there; and Oliver naturally wondered how they could possibly have found time to be so very industrious.



When the breakfast was cleared away; the merry old gentleman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way. The merry old gentleman, placing a snuff-box in one pocket of his trousers, a note-case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard-chain round his neck, and sticking a mock diamond pin in his shirt: buttoned his coat tight round him, and putting his spectacle-case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in which old gentlemen walk about the streets any hour in the day. Sometimes he stopped at the fire-place, and sometimes at the door, making believe that he was staring with all his might into shop-windows. At such times, he would look constantly round him, for fear of thieves, and would keep slapping all his pockets in turn, to see that he hadn't lost anything, in such a very funny and natural manner, that Oliver laughed till the tears ran down his face. All this time, the two boys followed him closely about: getting out of his sight, so nimbly, every time he turned round, that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last, the Dodger trod upon his toes, or ran upon his boot accidentally, while Charley Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in that one moment they took from him, with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuff-box, note-case, watch-guard, chain, shirt-pin, pocket-handkerchief, even the spectacle-case. If the old gentleman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was; and then the game began all over again.



Complete the sentences:

Oliver thinks that Charley and Dodger 'are ingenious workmen' for making pocketbooks and handkerchiefs, but_____. This reflects Oliver's naivety **because**_____.



Complete the sentences:

Even though Fagin is training Charley and Dodger how to become pickpockets_____. This reveals Oliver's naivety **because**_____.



Extension Task

‘How does Dickens present Oliver as naive in this extract?’

Write a paragraph/essay on the question above.

