



Oliver Twist

Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870)

Read by:	Tadhg Hynes	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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“Please Sir, may I have a little more?” And with that request known to all who have any familiarity with Dickens’s second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1838), the author embodies the cry of the times in England when the Industrial Revolution had all but hijacked the prior world of manners, only to introduce a cold and cruel world overrun by production and commerce. Empires are built over time. They are man’s grand statements of power, wealth and influence. But, as with all national gigantism, those who would take refuge in the nooks and hidden corners of a society on fire are invariably passed over, left behind, forgotten and ultimately sacrificed for what is too often called “some greater good.” This is what Dickens confronts in the character of young Oliver, a little boy orphan who’s bounced from work house to mortuary to the streets of London. In the big city he meets the Artful Dodger, a pickpocket and informal leader of a gang of street kids skilled in the ways of theft. The Dodger is Oliver’s entre to a hard, decadent and crooked world of

small time criminals overseen by an aqualung named Fagin and his dark colleagues, Monks, Bill Sykes and the kind prostitute, Nancy. Dickens indulges no sentimentality in his portrayal of the several characters who populate the underside of London’s brilliant and burgeoning city. It’s a book with a message and purpose, if only to remind all that orphans like Oliver deserve more than what they could hope to receive from a society in a race with itself to the top of the world. *(Summary by Michael Hogan)*

Charles John Huffam Dickens (February 7, 1812 – June 9, 1870) was an English novelist in the mid -19th Century who was one of the most prolific, popular and politically radical in the English language. He worked as a journalist as a young man before turning to fiction. His first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, was a great success and was followed by one blockbuster after another. He wrote at a torrid pace; most of his books first appeared as serialized chapters in weekly and monthly periodicals before being published as novels. He had a genius for uncanny caricatures of “personality types”, which he tagged with catchy names and mannerisms that are still part of the cultural lexicon. to this day.

He was born into a family of moderate means that went bankrupt during his early childhood, forcing Dickens to go to work at age twelve pasting labels on jars of bootblack for six schillings a week. His exposure to the lives of those oppressed by the cruelty and injustice of the industrializing world drove him to depict aspects of society that had been shunted aside with an unprecedented level of detail and candor. His insight into human nature was well-rounded, however, and his tales are equally beloved for their qualities of generosity, faith, compassion, and triumph of good over evil.

Dickens married Catherine Thompson Hogarth in 1838, who bore him ten children. He separated from her in 1858 but did not divorce, maintaining her in a separate residence until her death. He narrowly escaped death in a railroad crash in 1865 when all the first class carriages save Dickens’ plunged off a bridge under repair. After the incident his writing trailed off, and he went on tour giving readings of his bestsellers, which were immensely popular and notable for their passion and for his ability to portray the characters in unique voices.