

A-LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE B

'Elements of crime writing: resource package A'

For teaching from September 2015

For assessment from June 2017

- Creating your own questions
- Example answer and commentary - band 2 - Oliver Twist
- Example answer and commentary - band 3 - Oliver Twist
- Specimen question commentary - Paper 2A, Section B - Oliver Twist
- Text overview - Oliver Twist

This resource is part of the Elements of crime writing resource package.

Further resource packages are available as part of our exclusive resource collection.



Elements of crime writing - resource package A

A-level English Literature B (7717)

For teaching from September 2015

Introduction

We have developed a range of resources to help you plan your teaching and to create practice exam questions for every component of AS and A-level English Literature B. In this package, you will find a variety of resources related to Elements of crime writing, including:

- creating your own questions guidance document, which gives you the power to create your own practice exam questions
- sample assessment materials, which include question papers and mark schemes
- specimen question commentaries, which explain how a question taken from the sample assessment materials addresses the assessment objectives, and which give some suggestions of how the task might be approached
- exemplar student responses with marking commentary, including two responses of different mark bands are given to a specific question from the sample assessment materials.
- text overviews, which show you examples of how some of the set texts can be read through the lens of the genre of crime writing.

Resources in this package

- Creating your own questions
- Example answer and commentary - band 2 - *Oliver Twist*
- Example answer and commentary - band 3 - *Oliver Twist*
- Specimen question commentary - Paper 2A, Section B - *Oliver Twist*
- Text overview - *Oliver Twist*

How to use these resources

These resources are clearly an excellent starting point when planning your teaching. If you haven't yet decided on which texts or text combinations to teach, the Text Overviews and sample mark schemes give you details about some of the aspects of the genre each text covers, which can help you decide. Don't forget to consult the specification for a list of possible aspects. Once you have decided, these documents will help you to focus your teaching on those aspects and to work towards the relevant exam question in the Sample Assessment Materials. The exemplar student responses with marking commentary act as models for the students and help you to assess their work.

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Creating your own questions

A-level English Literature B (7717)

Elements of crime writing – resource package A

For teaching from September 2015

Introduction

Below you will find instructions on how to use the accompanying resources to create your own exam practice questions. This example shows you how to use the Elements of crime writing: resource package A to set questions for Paper 2A, Section B.

Paper 2A, Section B

If you have used the relevant question from the sample assessment materials or want to set a question on a different element of Crime, you can use these documents in the following way:

1. Look at how the relevant questions from the sample assessment materials are constructed, for example:

‘In *Oliver Twist* Dickens presents criminals as products of their society.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Dickens’ authorial methods.

The question wording (To what extent...authorial methods.) can remain unchanged. You will need, however, to construct a different ‘view’ depending upon the aspect of crime you want the students to explore.

2. Read the relevant text overview to help you construct a different ‘view’ to debate. Look for elements of crime which occur in the text but don’t forget that the absence of elements in a text is equally valid for debate. Other sources can be used to construct a view:

- look at the list of elements of crime in the specification and make up a critical view around one of these
- take a view from one of the writers in the Critical anthology around which to structure a debate
- research critical views about crime writing, on this or other crime texts, and adapt the quote in a more general sense so that students can consider how far this can be said to be true of the text they have studied

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Exemplar student response and examiner commentary

A-level English Literature B (7717)

Elements of crime writing – resource package A

For teaching from September 2015

Introduction

Below you will find an exemplar student response to a Section B question in the sample assessment materials, followed by an examiner commentary on the response.

Paper 2A, Section B

'In *Oliver Twist* Dickens presents criminals as products of their society'.

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Dickens' authorial methods.

Band 2 response

Criminals in *Oliver Twist* are characters who do things that are illegal like for example Sikes because he kills Nancy and Fagin because he gets boys to steal for him. However, these characters are not products of society in the way Nancy and the boys are. Nancy is a prostitute and a criminal, forced into crime because of her poverty and she is also a victim of Sikes' brutality.

Firstly, **Nancy** is definitely a product of her society. Nancy is one of the underclass and was a child of the streets. She then became a prostitute and part of a criminal gang. She is a product of the larger society and the smaller society of the criminal world as she is encouraged to make money for Sikes and for the gang she works for. Prostitution was immoral if not illegal when the book was written. Nancy is part of the criminal gang which lives by robbery. However, Nancy is a mainly a victim of society – or her criminal society - because Bill kills her in a terrible and bloody way because she tries to save Oliver and become a better person. She is the only developed female criminal and she is clearly a victim of the men in Fagin's gang and a product of two uncaring societies. There does not seem to be anyone who can help her which makes her a victim.

Oliver would be a good example to use to support the quotation. He is a criminal in a way because he is in Fagin's gang and he is with the gang when they break into a house. He is a product of society because society does not take proper care of orphans. Because he is abused by society he runs away and ends up in Fagin's gang. But he is really an innocent character. He is pushed through a window to help because he is small. Because he is forced to help he can be seen as a victim. He could also be a victim when he is at the workhouse and when he is an apprentice to the coffin makers because he is badly treated and because he does not get enough food. He is a

victim especially as he hates the work he has to do. This is why he runs away and is lured into Fagin's den. It could be said that Oliver is really a victim of society rather than a product because of the way he is treated by authority. He commits the terrible offence by the workhouse standards of asking for more food in the workhouse and is punished for it. However at the end of the novel Dickens rewards him for his goodness by giving him a good home with Mr Brownlow.

Bill Sikes and Fagin are the worst criminals as they are cruel and horrible. Sikes is a murderer. He attacks Nancy when he is in a temper and in his rage he kills her. He is also violent to his dog. Dickens makes Sikes speak in an aggressive way to show how truly nasty he is. If a boy were to 'peach' on him he says 'I'd grind his skull under the iron heel of my boot into as many grains as there are hairs upon his head'. It is hard to see that he is a product of his society as he just seems to be evil and chooses to live the life he does. He clearly does not want to work honestly in the way that society expects.

Fagin is a gang leader and he makes children work for him stealing – especially pick-pocketing and he takes all the profits. Today his crimes would also include child abuse. He is physically and mentally cruel to the boys. He doesn't care for them and his only worry is that if they are caught they might tell the police about him. He does not seem to be a product of society as he seems to be in control of his own society of the gang. At the end of the novel both Sikes and Fagin are punished for their crimes. Sikes is chased by a crowd as he tries to escape and he falls and hangs himself. Fagin is put in prison and then hanged. This is a typical ending when the bad people get punished. If they are products of society then society chooses in the end to destroy them.

Overall, there are lots of criminals in the novel and sometimes they are products of society, but Oliver is really a victim of an uncaring society but I feel most sorry for Nancy.

Examiner commentary

There are some points about criminals and their potentially being products of society here and the candidate focuses on the question in a fairly simple way. There is some attempt to argue that criminals are more victims or beneficiaries of society than products. However, most of the writing is of a generalised nature. There are few specific details and only one quotation. The candidate does not use the open book to support ideas.

AO1

There is some sense of ordering the ideas and separate paragraphs are used for the discussion of different characters. The writing is clear but there is only a generalised use of critical concepts.

AO2

There is a little awareness that Dickens has constructed the text to shape meanings and there is a simple understanding of authorial methods. The candidate makes some structural points about the ending of the novel in relation to the task and there is a comment on Sikes' language.

AO3

There is a simple understanding of criminal, moral and social contexts. There is also some sense of when the novel was written and how readers might respond from a modern contextual position.

AO4

In engaging with 'criminals' and the causes of criminality the candidate is connecting with elements of the wider genre; this is done implicitly.

AO5

The candidate is able to construct some argument and make some general points in the debate. A simple personal view is offered at the end.

This response seems to match the Band 2 descriptors.

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Exemplar student response and examiner commentary

A-level English Literature B (7717)

Elements of crime writing – resource package A

For teaching from September 2015

Introduction

Below you will find an exemplar student response to a Section B question in the sample assessment materials, followed by an examiner commentary on the response.

Paper 2A, Section B

'In *Oliver Twist* Dickens presents criminals as products of their society'.

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Dickens' authorial methods.

Band 3 response

In some ways the criminals in the novel could be seen as products of society especially the likes of Nancy who is murdered and Fagin who is hanged. On the other hand, some people might argue that they are not products because they choose this life for themselves and many of them do really terrible things like Sikes who kills Nancy and Fagin who uses the boys. In this essay, I am going to look at both points of view.

Firstly, it could be argued that Nancy is a victim, and therefore a product of her society, as like a lot of individuals who live at the bottom rung of society, the only way in which she is able to survive is by turning to criminal or immoral activity - in her case prostitution and involvement with more hardened criminals such as Sikes and Fagin. However, even though she is a criminal, Dickens presents her in a sympathetic way. It seems that she genuinely loves Sikes and when he is ill, she nurses him showing a caring and motherly side to her character despite the way he treats her. Moreover, Dickens even calls one of the chapters 'The Time Arrives for Nancy to Redeem her Pledge to Rose Maylie' where the word 'redeem' suggests that she is a moral individual who wants to redeem herself for the wrong that she did Oliver. Nancy is the one who confesses that she took Oliver away from Mr Brownlow and the truth about Monks so that the truth about his parentage and real character can be revealed. Therefore it seems that Nancy is essentially a moral character whose social circumstances have forced her into the criminal world. She does not seem to be actively making a choice to be a criminal. Society does not offer her any alternative way to live. Also, her murder makes her seem like a victim. Dickens portrays this in a really violent way as we are told she 'staggered and fell, nearly blinded with the blood that rained on from a deep gash in her forehead'. Sikes' attack on Nancy, which is partly motivated by the way she has interfered with

his plans, seems savage and terrible and therefore despite the fact she is a criminal, we see her as a product of the world she lives in and we sympathise with her.

Likewise, some people might see the boys who work for Fagin as victims of society even though they are criminals. The alternative life is one where they are starved and beaten as we see at the beginning of the novel through Dickens' presentation of Mrs Mann's baby farm and the suffering of Dick and also how society treats people in the workhouse. This is a life that even the moral Oliver cannot stand and tries to escape from. Society does not care for such impoverished and orphaned children. Their only way of surviving is therefore to steal in order to have enough food to live. Therefore the boys are products of their cruel 19th century world. Oliver is persuaded to go with Fagin at first because he offers him a bed and shelter something that society has failed to provide him with despite the fact today we would consider this a really basic thing. In fact, the life the boys have with Fagin, who is even described as a 'pleasant old gentleman' is seen as a great improvement on the conditions in the workhouse as he gives them clothes and food and does look after them in a way. He could almost be seen as an alternative mentor and father figure taking the place of a society that has failed them. He provides an alternative society though it could be said that the boys become products of that and they seem happier in that world. In films, for example, the Artful Dodger is often presented as a humorous and fun loving character who the reader really likes. Moreover, these boys are really harshly punished by society. In today's society, if you are a young boy under the age of 16 and commit some kind of crime you get sent to a detention centre or looked after in some way, but these boys are punished severely and even sent to the 'gallows' for simply stealing a handkerchief or pocket watch and no one seems to care. This makes them victims of society as well as products because they are forced into this life, punished too harshly and no one cares about them.

On the other hand, it is difficult to see characters like Bill Sikes as products or victims of society. He seems like a savage psychopath who is willing to stoop to any level for self gain. You could argue that he chooses the life of a criminal because he is greedy and even enjoys the violence of the criminal life. He has no moral conscience and even abandons Oliver, our innocent main character, after the attempted burglary leaving him to potentially face arrest and death despite the fact he is only a child. Moreover, when Sikes dies at his own hands we feel no sympathy for him. His treatment of others, the way he is a violent threat and his murder of Nancy all make it difficult to see this criminal as a product or victim at all.

Finally, it could be argued that Fagin is not a victim or product of society either. He has ample money that he keeps hidden and so he could choose another life. However, like a lot of the criminals in the book he chooses a life of crime rather than working hard like the Sowerberrys and Dickens is condemning people like him. Moreover, Dickens presents him as really unpleasant because of the way he treats the boys. For example, he doesn't care about the fact that Oliver has been arrested or the fact he might of found a better life with Mr Brownlow, he is only worried about the fact he might of 'peached'. He even says, 'He has not peached so far...If he means to blab us among his new friends, we may stop his mouth yet' which is really threatening and conveys the fact that he is happy to hurt the boys who work for him if it serves himself.

Overall, whilst some of the criminals are products of society and I do think that Dickens might be criticising justice and the fact it doesn't work and isn't very fair and blames society for lots of bad things happening, he doesn't present all criminals as products of society. A lot of the criminals are villains and so I don't agree with the statement.

Examiner commentary

This is a straightforward response and the candidate makes relevant points in a clear way.

AO1

The response is structured and ideas are sensibly ordered. The candidate uses terminology in an appropriate way. The writing is clearly expressed and mainly accurate although there are some awkward phrases and there is some imprecision.

AO2

The candidate has some sense of the author's shaping meanings but there is more on Dickens' intentions than the methods themselves. A little is said about how Dickens presents characters but the ideas are not detailed. There is a little discussion of how Dickens structures his novel in relation to whether or not his characters are products of their society but, given the fact this is an open book, the use of evidence is rather thin.

AO3

There is some engagement with social and legal contexts and there is valid discussion of how society treats children. There is also an awareness of how a modern society would treat young criminals as opposed to the Victorian system. However, again there is a lack of specific detail from the text.

AO4

There is straight forward understanding of the crime writing genre with relevant comments about what makes individuals become criminal and there are some specific examples of criminal activity. The candidate also focuses on the nature of victims of crime although the ideas lack development and detailed textual reference.

AO5

There is a relevant debate here although the latter section is less developed than the first. The response remains focused on the task though and there are straight forward points made both for and against the statement although the final argument is not really clinched.

This response seems consistent with the Band 3 descriptors.

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Specimen question commentary

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Elements of crime writing – resource package A

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Introduction

This resource explains how a question taken from the sample assessment material addresses the assessment objectives, with some suggestions of how the task might be approached. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every point that could be made but it gives teachers and students some guidance that will support their work on this paper.

Paper 2A, Section B

Paper 2, Section B questions are similar in construction to those in Paper 1, Section B. They will focus on a critical viewpoint about an element of crime or political and social protest writing in each of the texts. Students will be asked ‘to what extent’ they agree with the given view and they will be reminded to include detailed exploration of authorial methods. The student will of course have to be mindful of whether the text is poetry, drama or prose to show how these major genres operate in terms of the sub genre (crime or political and social protest writing) which they are discussing. In their chosen question, students can show how their text can be interpreted in different ways and they can also offer a strong personal view which is rooted in the text. Students have access to their texts in the examination and they should be using those texts to select relevant material to provide detail in their answers.

Sample question

‘In *Oliver Twist* Dickens presents criminals as products of their society.’

To what extent do you agree with this view? Remember to include in your answer relevant detailed exploration of Dickens’ authorial methods.

How the question meets the Assessment Objectives

In this question, as throughout the paper, the assessment objectives are all assessed. The key words and phrases in the question are: to what extent, relevant detailed exploration, authorial methods, and these are clearly connected to the assessment objectives. Students also need to engage with ‘criminals as products of their society’.

AO1 will be tested through the way the students construct their arguments and express their ideas.

AO2 is set up in the requirement for students to include a detailed exploration of Dickens’ authorial

methods and in doing this they will show how these methods shape meanings. Here students will specifically need to address narrative methods. **AO3** will be addressed through the students' showing their understanding of the crime writing contexts of *Oliver Twist* as they focus on criminals and in addition, their debates will incorporate relevant contextual factors about 'society' and when the text was written and how it has been received. In writing about, and engaging with criminals as products of Dickens' constructed society, **AO4** will be addressed as students will be connecting implicitly with concepts of the wider crime writing genre. **AO5** will be addressed when students assess the viewpoint of whether or not Dickens' criminals are presented as products of their society. Students will need to engage with the idea that Dickens might exonerate his criminal characters by placing the blame at the hands of society. Here they will be able to use their texts in an explicit way to select apposite material to support their arguments and it would be sensible to use that same material to interrogate authorial method. Comment on structure, voices, settings and language can be woven into the argument. Students need to think about how the methods selected help them to decide to what extent the given view is valid.

Possible content

There is ample room for students to debate the statement in this task, to discuss how far Dickens presents his characters as being 'products' of his constructed society. Some will see the novel directly as a social critique. The under privileged are seen as fighting for survival. Focus here is likely to be on Fagin, Sikes, Nancy and the boys, specifically the Artful Dodger. Comments could be made about the manner in which these individuals are forced into a life of crime by a society that has failed them and offers them no other opportunity. The 'society' is obviously a created world in *Oliver Twist* though students might well comment on how this society is drawn from Dickens' London in the 1830s. There may even be a contrast between the treatment of boys by the parish and the boys under Fagin – the destitution of boys such as Oliver results in their seeing no other means of survival (Fagin does at least provide them with a home, clothing and food). This is an improvement on the treatment Oliver, for example, receives from Mr Bumble. Fagin could also be regarded as a paternalistic figure in contrast to the likes of Mrs Mann in the way he offers the boys some sense of safety and community. Students may comment on the lack of provision for children without families that thus forces them into the criminal world as their only means of survival particularly given their lack of education and the lack of state concern.

Students may also examine the manner in which society and the justice system is far from just thereby making 'criminals' into victims. Society, in Dickens' novel, offers no sympathy for or understanding of law breakers. Many who transgress are desperate and many are children. Significantly all who transgress are punished by adult law. Comments could be made about the contrast between the manner in which those in socially privileged positions are treated and those of the lower classes. For example, whilst Mr Brownlow's taking a book from the bookseller is quickly forgiven, Oliver's supposed theft of a handkerchief is swiftly prosecuted in the harshest fashion despite lack of proof. Students could refer to the comments made by 'criminals' such as the Artful Dodger who are critical of the establishment and recognise that there is a very little justice to be found for individuals in the lowest rung of society.

Some students may argue that Dickens presents his criminal characters as products of their society in the way that they die: Nancy at the hands of her pimp and Fagin through hanging. Society thus either fails to protect them or punishes them, casting them as victims of a cruel and uncaring world rather than perpetrators of evil. Comments could likewise be made about the contrast between criminals and those in positions of power, such as Mr Bumble, who shape the behaviours of the underclass through their contempt of them. The powerful in *Oliver Twist* lack

sympathy for and have no desire to understand those in the social classes below them thereby making the criminals products of their society.

Some students will challenge the given statement and argue that Dickens' position is somewhat ambiguous regarding criminals being products of their society. Although it is clear that he has sympathy for Nancy and the children, he does not present explicit mitigating circumstances for Monks, Fagin or Sikes. Sikes is cast as a terrible villain particularly when he brutally murders Nancy who chooses to do good regarding Oliver despite her attachment to Sikes.

Sikes, and to some extent Fagin and Monks, appear not only criminal but malevolent in their brutality and treatment of others. In some ways they are classic examples of crime writing villainy motivated by greed and ill gotten gains. Students might well focus on the speech Dickens gives these characters and his description of them thereby making implicit links with the wider crime writing genre. It could also be argued that Dickens' anti-Semitic presentation of Fagin and Fagin's manipulation and often threatening treatment of the boys whom he is happy to see punished for his criminal gain, make it difficult to see those who run criminal enterprises as products. Moreover, given that Oliver is the novel's hero and given that sympathy lies primarily with him, Fagin and the other boys' treatment of Oliver in taking him from the care of Mrs Bedwin, Mr Brownlow's kindly housekeeper, and denying him potential happiness for some time, casts them as villains and agents of society rather than products of it. Some may simply propose that Dickens suggests that criminals choose their lifestyle. The Artful Dodger, for example, seems to enjoy his work.

It could also be argued that the only real products of the society Dickens presents are the boys, such as Oliver and Dick, who are abused and ignored by a system which sees little value in them. Their morality contrasts with the immorality of Sikes, Fagin and Monks, which makes it difficult to see the adults themselves as products. Significantly Dickens does not provide biographies or psychological profiles for these adult criminals in any attempt to excuse or explain their behaviour. In fact, Dickens could be seen as censorious, presenting them and their criminal acts in an overwhelmingly negative light implicitly condemning their refusal to work in an honest and decent way. Students might also argue that Fagin and Sikes set up an alternative society over which they rule and that children become products of this world. Sikes is portrayed as a psychopathic; Fagin takes all the boys gain for himself and is happy to see them punished for his crimes as long as they do not 'peach' on him; Monks appears bent on the destruction of Oliver; even the Artful Dodger is canny and worldly-wise and thus happy to manipulate the innocent Oliver for his own ends. Therefore it could be argued that it is difficult to perceive them as anything but inherently bad and not products of the wider society. As a result Dickens suggests that they therefore deserve their fate.

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Text overview – *Oliver Twist*

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For teaching from September 2015

Introduction

Read our overview which shows how you can consider *Oliver Twist* in relation to the genre of Crime Writing. We haven't covered every element of this genre. Instead we hope this guide will provide a springboard to help you plan, and to get you and your students thinking about the text in more detail.

"The condemned criminal was seated on his bed, rocking himself from side to side, with a countenance more like that of a snared beast than the face of a man."

Criminal acts

Given the heavy focus on crime and the London underworld, it is not difficult to see the novel as a clear example of a specific type of Crime Writing, one rooted in social realism. *Oliver Twist's* narrative is driven by a number of crimes. Bill Sikes' murder of Nancy is the most horrible and dramatic; Fagin's corruption of young boys, specifically his attempt to pervert Oliver, covers more of the story's action; Monks' vengeful spite as he tracks down Oliver and seeks his ruin provides a narrative structure; but perhaps surpassing all these are the terrible crimes committed by the state against its people, especially children, through the passing of the Poor Law Act of 1834. The creation of workhouses, the authorities' condoning child labour and the wide-held belief of those with power that poverty equalled criminality, are included by Dickens to show that the values held by the state are more devious and cynical than the criminal world itself. Since 1838 many of the laws that underpin the novel have been abolished, and public attitudes have likewise changed. Some practices which were once lawful are now crimes themselves, like making young children work and hanging them for acts of theft. As a result, pinning down crimes and judging them is problematic for modern readers.

The novel reflects the London of the 1830s as Dickens saw it and incorporates his reactions to it. His own views were complex. There is abhorrence for many laws and accepted practices but also contempt for law breakers. Sometimes there is criticism of the middle classes and of criminals, and sometimes there is sympathy. Fagin and Sikes are outlaws, but also social outcasts. They are developed with more psychological realism than Oliver and, at their ends, they are figures of terrifying loneliness.

Crimes and criminals

As Oliver progresses through childhood he encounters the criminal world first hand: theft, abduction, murder, prostitution, deception and fraud are at the heart of Dickens' novel.

Thieving is the profession of Fagin's gang and his empire depends on children of poverty being recruited as pickpockets. Stealing leads to some of the children being hanged.

Whereas modern readers are likely to be horrified at the practice of abducting children, Fagin and his adult gang think that this is their right, and the authorities seem to turn a blind eye to it. Some children are lured into Fagin's den and this is certainly the case when Oliver first goes, persuaded by the Artful Dodger that he will be given a home. When Oliver escapes from Fagin, he is forcibly kidnapped from Mr Brownlow's and returned to the den. Oliver is also an unwilling accomplice in Sikes' robbery and, when he is shot, his abductors show little compassion. The most violent and terrible crime is the brutal murder of Nancy by a raging Sikes who accuses her of betrayal. The incident is charged with emotional intensity. Sikes beats his pistol on the upturned face of Nancy until she "staggered and fell; nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead" and then as she attempts to pray "he seized a heavy club and struck her down".

Dickens mainly makes his criminals detestable. He is censorious of their behaviour, their lifestyle and seemingly their poverty. In some ways he validates prevailing 19th century attitudes regarding the lives of the poor, supporting the views that led to the Poor Law. At times the novel seems to support the belief that the population needed checking because, rather than working, people would prefer a dissolute life and claim parish relief. Dickens' criminals are made to look horrible, as if God is displeased with them. He paints them as being deformed and wretched and their lives as squalid and miserable. They skulk "uneasily through the dirtiest paths of life, with the great black ghastly gallows closing up their prospect..." In creating his characters, Dickens establishes a link between their immorality and their physical repulsiveness. Fagin, for example, is reptilian and "villainous looking".

Fagin is the chief criminal, a manipulative and intellectual kind of villain, feeding off others. He preys on children, whom he brutally trains to pick pockets. He does not care if they are caught and hanged so long as they do not "peach" on him. Although the children are given a home of sorts, they have to deliver the proceeds of their filching to him.

Sikes is a more terrible and terrifying villain, trumping Fagin's evil; he is a violent, brutal robber, inspiring terror in most who come across him. His murder of Nancy is vicious, an act of vengeance and anger.

Monks is another villain who exhibits a festering kind of evil which works below the surface; he is manipulative and malignant. Unlike other criminals in Fagin's camp, he is not poor. However, although he inspires some terror and mystery when he first enters the novel, he becomes little more than a plot mechanism, seeking to destroy his half-brother Oliver out of spite.

The Artful Dodger is a cunning worldly-wise thief, who sees himself as a professional man, wanting to rise in the world. The 'dodger', despite being drawn with some affection, is self-seeking and full of guile.

Victims

Oliver is the novel's insipid victim and literary hero. He is a victim of the official world which first abuses him and, after his escape, he becomes a victim of Fagin's villainy, Sikes' cruelty and Monks' vindictiveness. However Oliver also breaks laws: he assists Sikes, albeit unwillingly, in the house robbery because he is small and can get through windows. Even earlier, when he runs away from the workhouse, he breaks the law by being on the road with no money (the 1824 vagrancy act

criminalised begging and sleeping outdoors without means of support). Yet he is no true criminal and Dickens makes his face attractive to signify his innocence.

Nancy is a law breaker in that she supports Fagin and Sikes in acts of robbery. She is also a prostitute, though her prostitution is only alluded to. However, she is also a victim, immersed into Fagin's world from the age of five and ultimately beaten to death by her brutal lover, Sikes. Nancy's representation in the novel as primarily being a victim is secured by her sacrificing her life to keep Oliver away from a world she cannot leave. She also breathes 'one prayer of mercy to her Maker' as she dies.

Settings

Dickens creates very clear place and time settings in *Oliver Twist*: the streets of 1830s London are specifically named, there is the workhouse, Fagin's den, the three Cripples and Newgate prison. These dark and dangerous settings are contrasted with the middle-class residences of Brownlow and Mrs Maylie and are an important element of the crime writing genre.

Police/law enforcers

There is a police force of sorts operating in the world of *Oliver Twist*, but Dickens does not place police constables in the foreground. The work of detection and arresting criminals is carried out by individual citizens like Brownlow (who tracks down Monks and interrogates him), and by mobs; though police assistance is in the background should it be needed. When it is thought Oliver has stolen Brownlow's handkerchief the crowd shout "Stop thief" and they hound him with "a passion for hunting". Later a dehumanised mob pursues Sikes, in a state of frenzy and fury.

Criminal trials and punishment

In *Oliver Twist*, punishment is meted out on criminals to serve Dickens' moral purpose. The apparatus of the law abounds: courts of law, magistrates and court officials, prisons and executions.

Formal trials are an important part of the framework of the novel. When Oliver is taken to the metropolitan police office for apparently stealing Brownlow's handkerchief, despite Brownlow's reluctance to press charges, Oliver is tried by the magistrate Mr Fang. He is sentenced to three months hard labour which is only retracted when a late witness arrives at the trial to say that Oliver is not the thief.

The Artful Dodger's trial for stealing a silver snuff box is a humorous farce. His punishment is transportation to Australia.

Fagin's trial contrasts with the two above in that it is utterly serious. The scene is recounted through Fagin's eyes and suspense is created when the jury return their verdict: "The jury returned, and passed him close. He could glean nothing from their faces; they might as well have been of stone. Perfect stillness ensued – not a rustle – not a breath – Guilty."

To Sikes, Dickens administers a different justice. After Sikes kills Nancy he is fearful of the consequences. He is terrified by shadows "but these fears were nothing compared to the sense of

that morning's ghastly figure following him at his heels". It seems here that Sikes' conscience is at work. In no way can murderers escape, or justice be evaded; in *Oliver Twist* Providence is not asleep. Sikes is terrified by his guilt and, like Macbeth, is transfigured by the act of murder. He tries to escape but cannot, and after being pursued by the crowd onto a house roof he accidentally hangs himself.

Monks' punishment is less severe. After his capture he is given a second chance by Oliver's generosity and allowed to leave England, though in America he reverts to crime and dies in prison.

For Fagin, Dickens reserves the harshest form of institutionalised punishment: Newgate prison and then hanging. When Fagin is condemned to the gallows he screams in terror as the crowd gather. He does not repent.

Moral purpose

In *Oliver Twist*, ultimately the good prosper and the evil are punished. In this example of Crime Writing there is a moral outcome. Oliver discovers he has noble origins and his being adopted by the kindly Mr Brownlow is his reward for his inner goodness.

This resource is part of the Elements of crime writing resource package A.

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