

SOURCE A

Extract from 'Oliver Twist' by Charles Dickens (1838)

Oliver's unmarried mother gave birth to him in a workhouse and after she had been found lying in the street. She died after giving birth, and since no-one knew who she was, her baby was left in the care of the charitable institutions in the parish.

1 For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery¹
2 and deception². He was brought up by hand. The hungry and destitute³ situation of the
3 infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse to the parish⁴ authorities. The parish
4 authorities inquired with dignity of the workhouse authorities, whether there was no
5 female then domiciled⁵ in 'the house' who was in a situation to impart to Oliver Twist, the
6 consolation⁶ and nourishment of which he stood in need. The workhouse authorities
7 replied with humility⁷ that there was not. Upon this, the parish authorities
8 magnanimously⁸ and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be 'farmed', or, in other
9 words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where
10 twenty or thirty other juvenile⁹ offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all
11 day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental
12 superintendence¹⁰ of an elderly female, who receive the culprits at and for the
13 consideration of sevenpence-halfpenny per small head per week. Sevenpence-halfpenny's
14 worth per week is a good round diet for a child; a great deal may be got for sevenpence-
15 halfpenny, quite enough to overload its stomach, and make it uncomfortable. The elderly
16 female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children;
17 and she had a very accurate perception¹¹ of what was good for herself. So, she appropriated
18 the greater part of the weekly stipend¹² to her own use, and consigned the rising
19 parochial¹³ generation to even a shorter allowance than was originally provided for them.

¹ Treachery (noun) = *betrayal of trust.*

² Deception (noun) = *the action of deceiving/lying to someone.*

³ Destitute (adjective) = *extremely poor and lacking the means to provide for oneself.*

⁴ Parish (noun) = *a small administrative district typically having its own church and a priest or pastor.*

⁵ Domiciled (verb) = *reside or be based in.*

⁶ Consolation (noun) = *the comfort received by a person after a loss or disappointment.*

⁷ Humility (noun) = *the quality of having a modest or low view of one's importance.*

⁸ Magnanimously (adverb) = *generous or forgiving, especially towards a rival or less powerful person.*

⁹ Juvenile (adjective) = *for or relating to young people.*

¹⁰ Superintendence (noun) = *the management or arrangement of an activity or organisation; supervision.*

¹¹ Perception (noun) = *the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.*

¹² Stipend (noun) = *a fixed regular sum paid as a salary.*

¹³ Parochial (adjective) = *relating to a Church parish.*