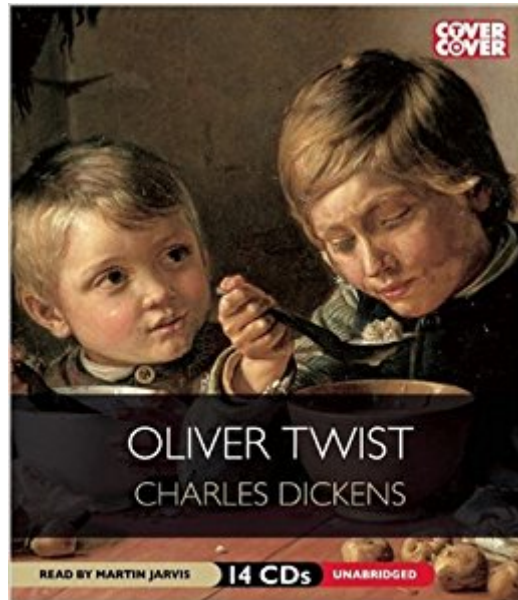




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Oliver Twist



Synopsis

Charles Dickens gift for social commentary is displayed to brilliant effect in this story of the poor orphan, Oliver Twist. Oliver experiences the terror and brutality of the criminal world with his companions: a pickpocket, a thief, a prostitute, and a fence.

Book Information

Audio CD: 1 pages

Publisher: BBC Audiobooks America; Unabridged edition (May 11, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1602838763

ISBN-13: 978-1602838765

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.7 x 6.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

This book surprised me, not by the quality of its writing, which one can expect from Charles Dickens, but by the violent, lusty primal quality of the story. This is no dry musty tome, but a vital novel that arouses both passion and intellect. A literal page turner, I found myself having more than one sleepless night when I just couldn't put it down. Inside are some of the major characters in the realm of fiction; Fagin and his gang of child thieves, including the Artful Dodger. Nancy, the proverbial hooker with a heart of gold. Master Charles Bates (was this a pun even then?) Bad Bill Sikes, who shows the darker edge to all of this dangerous fun, and the innocent, pure Oliver Twist, who is the very definition of nature over nurture. A great book, and one that I am glad to have finally read.

A novel of this size can be daunting for the reader. "If I start this book, I'm going to have to spend the next month finishing it". That's what I thought anyway. But in Oliver Twist I sailed through the pages. It's rare that a classic, and I have read many of them, becomes a page-turner but this one did. Maybe I was lucky in not having seen the film versions prior to the reading of the book because I desperately wanted to find out what happened to Oliver and the multitude of other brilliantly written

characters who inhabit the pages of Dickens' classic. The plot is simple. A boy escapes his orphan home to live in London with a group of thieves and pickpockets. He's saved from this depraved life by a kindly, lonely old gentleman. But the villains, Bill Sykes and especially Fagin, fear that the boy may rat them out and so they kidnap him back. Can Oliver make it back to the life he deserves? Oliver's story is not a very original one, but it is enlivened by some of the greatest characters I've ever seen written. My personal favourites and there are many, are Noah Claypole who becomes a principle player and a very funny one at that, near the book's conclusion; and Mr. Brownlow, who's catchphrase "I'll eat my own head" had me bursting into laughter. The book is diminished by its excessive sentimentality at the conclusion. Its female characters, apart from the courageous Nancy, are written in a golden light so as to become fantasies rather than the gloriously dirty reality of their male counterparts. A sub-plot between Mary and her boyfriend is ridiculously excessive. Against these weaknesses, the book is a triumph of character. Often memorably played on screen, the two villains have become more famous than the title character, who is slightly simpering. Fagin is deliciously smarmy and Sykes is evil incarnate. They get their comeuppance in justifiably brutal fashion. Dickens like most of us was a sucker for a happy ending.

I couldn't get into Dickens in high school, I guess my maturity level just wasn't there. But I bought this classic for my home schooling 6th grade daughter, and vowed to read it no matter what. Well, after the first chapter, I was hooked. And she really loved it too. We read it much faster than I had anticipated, considering the language and size of the book. Highly recommended!

Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is, of course, wonderful, deserving all the fame and fondness that it has garnered over the years. I'll instead focus on this Penguins Classics edition, which may interest those looking for a hardcover of the novel. The cover is nicely decorated and textured, the paper is high quality, the introduction and notes are informative, and the illustrations are wonderful. But there are two negatives. First and foremost, the font is smaller than average and a strain on the eyes after a while. I also purchased *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Emma* from the same Penguin series, and their fonts are larger and easier on the eyes--what you would expect in typical hardcovers. I wish they had used the same font here. Second, and again in contrast to the Austen novels, the ink for the marvelous watches on the cover smudges a little, and is (as another reviewer noted) lifted partly off with the sticker on the back. This is not a big deal for me, but may be for others. Otherwise, this is a fine edition that looks great on the shelf and is a pleasure to peruse. Just remember to give your eyes more frequent breaks.

The creative novel *Oliver Twist*, written by Charles Dickens in 1838, defines a classic of all times. This intense story reflects a young boy's life in London with no family or place to go. Oliver's mother dies while giving birth to her son in the beginning of the book. Oliver's father remains unknown. Throughout the book the reader sees constant struggles. Oliver is befriended by Fagin and his company. Fagin, along with the Artful Dodger, invite Oliver to stay with them and become a thief. During one of Oliver's pick pocketing adventures; he is caught by Mr. Brownlow. Instead of reprimanding the young lad, Mr. Brownlow decides to raise him. Oliver desperately searches for the answer to his past while trying to stay alive on the streets of London. Ironically, Mr. Brownlow is Oliver's grandfather. A dominate theme of *Oliver Twist* examines the importance of family. Oliver's early years taught him to fend for himself and he suffers from never experiencing a loving and nurturing childhood. The setting of the book plays a powerful role as the story unfolds. Dickens describes the setting of London and all the places that Oliver stays very descriptively. "The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odor. The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt..." (page. 56). Dickens explains the facilities that were available to poor Oliver and makes them sound unbearable. He does an excellent job making the setting come alive and allows the reader to plight. I would recommend all readers at some point in life to delve into this classic. I found *Oliver Twist* very moving and towards the end hoping only the best for poor Oliver.

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