

# Charles Dickens 200 Years

## OLIVER TWIST

### Ex.1. Speaking

Discuss the following questions in pairs or groups of three.

1. Have you ever read any biographical books?
2. What do you know about *Oliver Twist*?
3. Do you have any babies in your family?
4. Do you know when exactly and where you were born?
5. What are your parents like?

### Ex.2. Vocabulary

Read the beginning of Chapter 1 from *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens and decide which of the words in bold mean the following:

- |                             |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Weakly                   | 9. To happen      |
| 2. To try not to            | 10. Breathing     |
| 3. Doctor                   | 11. Certainly     |
| 4. Uncertainly              | 12. Poor          |
| 5. Lucky                    | 13. Problem       |
| 6. People living together   | 14. Baby          |
| 7. To give                  | 15. Not authentic |
| 8. To let in, open the door |                   |

### Ex.3. Reading Comprehension

Read the statements below and decide if they are true or false.

1. Oliver was not born in a hospital.
2. His mother was a rich lady.
3. He had problems breathing and nearly died.
4. Oliver's mother was surrounded by her family when she was giving birth to Oliver.
5. Oliver's birth is described with a sense of humour.

## OLIVER TWIST

### CHAPTER 1

Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to **refrain** from mentioning, and to which I will **assign** no **fictitious** name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse was born; on a day and date which I need not trouble myself to repeat, inasmuch as it can be of no possible consequence to the reader, in this stage of the business at all events; the item of mortality whose name is prefixed to the head of this chapter.

For a long time after it was **ushered** into this world of sorrow and trouble, by the parish **surgeon**, it remained a matter of considerable **doubt** whether the child would survive to bear any name at all; in which case it is somewhat more than probable that these memoirs would never have appeared; or, if they had, that being comprised within a couple of pages, they would have possessed the inestimable merit of being the most concise and faithful specimen of biography, extant in the literature of any age or country.

Although I am not disposed to maintain that the being born in a workhouse, is in itself the most fortunate and enviable circumstance that can possibly befall a human being, I do mean to say that in this particular instance, it was the best thing for Oliver Twist that could by possibility have **occurred**. The fact is, that there was considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of **respiration**,--a troublesome practice, but one which custom has rendered necessary to our easy existence; and for some time he lay gasping on a little flock mattress, rather unequally poised between this world and the next: the balance being decidedly in favour of the latter. Now, if, during this brief period, Oliver had been surrounded by careful grandmothers, anxious aunts, experienced nurses, and doctors of profound wisdom, he would most **inevitably** and indubitably have been killed in no time. There being nobody by, however, but a **pauper** old woman, who was rendered rather misty by an unwonted allowance of beer; and a parish surgeon who did such matters by contract; Oliver and Nature fought out the point between them. The result was, that, after a few struggles, Oliver **breathed**, sneezed, and proceeded to advertise to the **inmates** of the workhouse the fact of a new **burden** having been imposed upon the parish, by setting up as loud a cry as could reasonably have been expected from a male **infant** who had not been possessed of that very useful appendage, a voice, for a much longer space of time than three minutes and a quarter.

As Oliver gave this first proof of the free and proper action of his lungs, the patchwork coverlet which was carelessly flung over the iron bedstead, rustled; the pale face of a young woman was raised **feebly** from the pillow; and a faint voice imperfectly articulated the words, 'Let me see the child, and die.'