



A ROMAN POLANSKI FILM
OLIVER TWIST

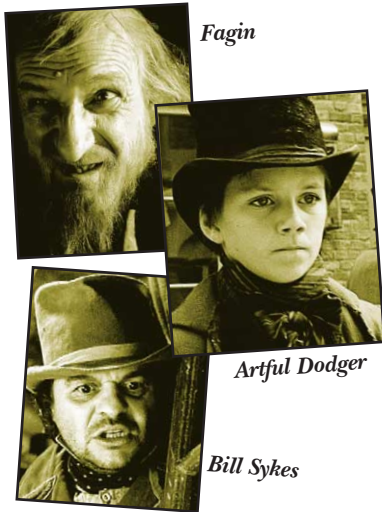
Powerful Words, Timeless Themes

The new film *Oliver Twist*, coming to theaters this September, brings Charles Dickens' storytelling vividly to life as never before. We see strong and memorable characters like the clever Fagin, and the evil and vicious Bill Sykes. We experience startling contrasts in lifestyles and morality, as seen through Oliver's day-to-day struggle to survive.

Part A. Many of the themes and issues with which Charles Dickens dealt still exist today. Think about each theme listed below. On the back of this sheet, list some modern-day examples.

- purity amid corruption
- the difference between social classes
- the plight of the poor
- the connection between poverty and crime

In the film, see how the issues of peer pressure, being bullied, wanting friends at almost any cost, being the "new kid," and standing up for oneself relate to today.



Fagin

Artful Dodger

Bill Sykes

Part B. Charles Dickens used literary tools such as caricature—his flair for exaggeration resulted in some memorable characters, such as the officious, self-important Mr. Bumble—satire, and symbolism to make *Oliver Twist* a powerful and compelling story. Even though it took place in the 19th century, it lives on today in part because of the carefully crafted descriptions that brought Dickens' characters to life. For example, consider this description of the Artful Dodger:

He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, commonfaced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short for his age; with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes...He was, altogether, as roystering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six...

Because many of his stories, including *Oliver Twist*, were originally published as serials, Dickens also made frequent use of cliffhangers—just as the writers of many TV dramas do in their season finales. Use the back of this paper to list a few examples of effective cliffhangers that you have seen.

In the film, note how Fagin's boys have taken control of their own destiny. How much are they like members of gangs today?

Part C.

Now that you know a little about some of Dickens' tricks of the storytelling trade, try your hand at creating a blog, editorial, or humorous piece that deals with a modern-day social issue. You can begin to plan by completing the statements at right.

My issue is _____

This issue is important because _____

The point I would like to make about this issue is _____

The kind of piece I will write is _____

See *Oliver Twist* in theaters near you this September and enter the "Write Like the Dickens" essay contest for a chance to win a trip to London. Ask your teacher for details, and go to www.sony.com/oliver Twist for more on the film.