**Oliver! A Study Guide**

Charles Dickens’ Oliver Twist is the story of a poor boy, born in a workhouse. Notable for its unromantic portrayal of criminals and their sordid lives, the story exposes the cruel treatment of the many orphans in London in the mid-19th century. In this early example of the social novel, Dickens highlights some of the terrible injustices of the time as he saw them, including child labour, the recruitment of children as criminals, and the presence of street children.

The many situations Oliver faces are primarily based in good versus evil, with evil continually trying to corrupt and exploit good, but good winning out in the end. One can learn the following **10 Life Lessons** and more from Oliver Twist, one of the finest Broadway adaptations of a literary classic:

1. When Oliver escapes to London, he has several occasions to quit in the face of difficulties but he gets up every time he falls and doesn’t stop until he reaches his destination. **Learn not to quit when the going gets tough.** You don’t have to see the whole journey at once, just stay positive and stay strong and the accomplishment of completion will be worth it.

2. Oliver raises his voice against the mistreatment of orphans. He rebels against the establishment by asking for another serving of food “Please sir I want some more”, an example of how important it is to **always strive for more so as to not settle for less**.

3. Despite being small and fragile, Oliver dares to **stand up in the face of adversity**, opposing violence, poverty, and exploitation. By doing so Oliver ultimately wins the game of good versus evil.

4. Along Oliver’s journey, his innocent qualities and respectful manner towards people never changes, even though he is frequently belittled for it. This attitude is his identity and, despite his situation being sinister, filthy, gloomy, and seemingly inescapable, he continues to **be respectful of others**, a quality that attracts the attention of his wealthy benefactor and his ultimate salvation.

5. Oliver remains pure-hearted. It is natural for a person to change depending on their friends and associates. In the midst of corruption and degradation, he steers away from evil when those around him give in to it, showing that those who **remain true to oneself** will triumph.

6. **Look for the good in others.** The storyline shows that there are good people all around, they embellish good thoughts, their positive personality traits have great impact on lives, and their influences can be stronger if you let them.

7. Stay humble, curious, and present to **ensure the learning never stops**. Keep going. Keep learning. Keep letting yourself get lost. You might just end up exactly where you wanted to be all along.

8. Oliver never loses his compassion, showing that even those who live in a world of crime and corruption deserve to be recognized for kindness and good intentions. **Forgiveness is the highest standard** of love in action.

9. Throughout his travels and woes, Oliver **always** **maintains a positive attitude** and shows all of us how beneficial this approach is to getting through the hard times and suffering.

10. Oliver was born for better things but must first survive in the savage world of the underclass before rising from the ashes. And, although he has been abused and neglected all his life, Oliver recoils at the idea of victimizing anyone else. The prime example of the Golden Rule… **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.**

**Activities**

**News Parallels**. Bring in an article from a newspaper that has a story that reminds you of something that happens in this book.

**Game Time**. Have the students each create a game that enhances the player's knowledge of the book. Have a scheduled day to play all of these games together.

**Art in Multiple Mediums**. Create a piece of art in any medium that portrays one of the basic themes of the book. Have different groups do different themes, and then have the class view all the different works.

**Titles**. Have the students break into groups. Have each group create a new and more fitting title for this book. Make sure they are ready to defend their choices.

**Dust Jackets**. Create a dust jacket for this book. Have each student cover their copy of the book with this dust jacket.