

***Oliver!* Synopsis**

(adapted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oliver!#Synopsis>)

Act I

The musical opens in the workhouse, as the half-starved orphan boys are entering the enormous dining room for dinner ("Food Glorious Food"). They are fed only gruel. Oliver gathers up the courage to ask for more. He is immediately apprehended and is told to gather his belongings by Mr. Bumble and the Widow Corney, the heartless and greedy caretakers of the workhouse ("Oliver!"). Mr. Bumble and Widow Corney are left alone, and Mr. Bumble begins to make amorous advances. Mrs. Corney pretends to resent his attentions ("I Shall Scream!"), but ends up on Mr. Bumble's lap. Oliver comes back and is sold ("Boy for Sale") and apprenticed to an undertaker, Mr. Sowerberry. He and his wife taunt Oliver and Mr. Bumble ("That's Your Funeral"), causing Mr. Bumble to become angry and storm out. Oliver is sent to sleep in the basement with the coffins ("Where is Love?").

The next morning Noah Claypole, an employee of Sowerberry, insults Oliver's dead mother, whereupon Oliver begins pummeling him. Mrs. Sowerberry and her daughter, Charlotte run in, and Mr. Bumble is sent for. He and the Sowerberrys lock Oliver in a coffin, but during all the commotion Oliver escapes. After a week on the run, he meets the Artful Dodger, who is, unknown to Oliver, a boy pickpocket and he invites Oliver to come and live in Fagin's den, as Londoners welcome Oliver to the life of the city ("Consider Yourself"). Fagin is a criminal, and he is in the business of teaching young boys to pick pockets. Oliver is completely unaware of any criminality, and believes that the boys make handkerchiefs rather than steal them. Oliver is introduced to Fagin and his boys, and is taught their ways ("You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two").

The next day, Oliver meets Nancy, the live-in girlfriend of the terrifying Bill Sykes, a burglar whose abuse she endures because she loves him. Nancy, along with her friend Bet and the boys, sing about how they don't mind a bit of danger ("It's a Fine Life"). Oliver bows deeply to Nancy and Bet, trying to be polite. All the boys laugh and mimic Oliver. Nancy singles out Dodger to demonstrate the way the rich people treat each other ("I'd Do Anything"). Nancy and Bet leave and Oliver is sent out with the other boys on his first pickpocketing job ("Be Back Soon"). Dodger, another boy named Charley Bates, and Oliver decide to stick together, and when Dodger and Charley rob Mr. Brownlow, a wealthy old man, they run off, leaving Oliver to be arrested for the crime ("The Capture of Oliver").

Act II

In the Three Cripples pub, Nancy sings an old tavern song ("Oom Pah Pah"). Bill Sykes makes his first appearance, and disperses the crowd ("My Name"). Dodger runs in and tells Fagin about Oliver's capture and removal to the Brownlow household. Fagin and Bill decide to kidnap Oliver to protect themselves. Nancy at first refuses to help, but Bill physically abuses her and forces her into obedience. In spite of this, Nancy still loves Bill, and believes he loves her too ("As Long As He Needs Me").

The next morning, at Mr. Brownlow's house in Bloomsbury, Mrs. Bedwin the housekeeper sings to Oliver ("Where Is Love? [Reprise]"), and Oliver wakes up. Mr. Brownlow and Dr. Grimwig discuss Oliver's condition. They decide that he is well enough to go outside, and so Brownlow sends Oliver to return some books to the library. Oliver sees a group of street vendors and joins them in song ("Who Will Buy?"). As the vendors leave, Nancy and Bill appear and grab Oliver. They bring him back to Fagin's den, where Nancy saves Oliver from a beating from Sykes after the boy tries to flee. Nancy remorsefully reviews their dreadful life, but Bill maintains that any living is better than none. Fagin tries to act as an intermediary ("It's A Fine Life [Reprise]"). Left alone, Fagin wonders what his life might be like if he left London and began an honest life ("Reviewing the Situation"), however, after thinking of various excuses, he elects to remain a thief.

Back at the workhouse, Mr. Bumble and the Widow Corney, now unhappily married, meet the dying pauper Old Sally and another old lady, who tell them that Oliver's mother, Agnes, left a gold locket when she died in childbirth. Old Sally stole the locket, which she gives to the Widow Corney. Mr. Bumble and Widow Corney, realizing that Oliver may have wealthy relatives, visit Mr. Brownlow, hoping to profit from any reward given for information of him ("Oliver! [Reprise]"). He throws them out, but recognizes the picture inside the locket as a picture of his daughter, and realizes that Oliver is actually his grandson.

Nancy visits Brownlow and promises to deliver Oliver to him safely that night near London Bridge. She ponders again about Bill ("As Long As He Needs Me [Reprise]"). Suspecting that Nancy is up to something, Bill follows her as she sneaks Oliver out. At London Bridge, he confronts them, knocks Oliver unconscious, and clubs Nancy to death. He then grabs Oliver and runs off. Mr. Brownlow arrives and discovers Nancy's body. A large crowd forms, among them the distraught Bet. Fagin and his boys leave their hideout in panic. Bill appears on the rooftop, holding Oliver as hostage and threatening to kill him. A soldier shoots Bill and the crowd rescues Oliver, who is reunited with Mr. Brownlow. The mob disperses to track down Fagin, who appears and decides that the time has never looked better for him to straighten out his life ("Reviewing the Situation [Reprise]").