

# Oliver Twist

## Scene Two - An Offer for Oliver

**(Narrator stands in front of the closed stage curtains. They are lit only by a spotlight.)**

**Narrator:** For a week after the terrible crime of asking for more supper, Oliver is a prisoner in the dark and lonely room which he has been locked in by Mr Limbkins. He cries bitterly all day. When the long nights arrive, he spreads his hands in front of his eyes to shut out the darkness. He crouches in the corner and tries to sleep, despite trembling from the cold. Gloom and loneliness surround him.

As Oliver drifts in and out of sleep, Mr Gamfield arrives at the workhouse on his donkey. A man in a white waistcoat quickly heads outside to greet the unsuspecting chimney sweep.

**(Curtains open as Narrator exits to stage right. The man in the white waistcoat crosses the stage to approach Mr Gamfield and his donkey, who are stood outside of the workhouse gate at stage left. Both characters smile at one another as a greeting.)**

**Mr Gamfield:** This boy, sir... the one that the parish wants rid of..

**Man:** **(smiles)** Yes, my man. What about him?

**Mr Gamfield:** Well, if you would like him to learn a very pleasant trade in a good, respectable chimney sweeping business, I want a helper. I'm ready to take him – just like your advert asks.

**Man:** Go inside. **(points towards the workhouse)**

**(The man in the white waistcoat walks towards the workhouse entrance at stage right. Mr Gamfield follows behind him. After leaving the donkey outside, Mr Gamfield enters the workhouse. He joins the gentleman who is whispering to Mr Limbkins by the table downstage.)**

**Mr Limbkins:** It's a nasty job.

**Man:** Young boys have been killed in chimneys before now.

**Mr Gamfield:** That's because the straw was damp before they lit it in the chimney. That's all smoke and no fire! Smoke isn't any use in making a boy come down the chimney; it only sends him to sleep. There's nothing like a good, hot flame to make them come running!

**(The gentleman in the white waistcoat chuckles but quickly stops upon a stern look from Mr Limbkins. The two whisper between themselves for a few moments.)**

**Mr Limbkins:** We have thought about your offer and we do not agree with it.

**Man:** Not at all. Definitely not.

**(Mr Gamfield looks sad. With a hunched back, he walks away from the others. He pauses by the door and looks back.)**

**Mr Gamfield:** So, you won't let me have him, gentlemen?

**Mr Limbkins:** No; it's a very nasty job. We think you should take less than the money we advertised.

**(Mr Gamfield's mood brightens. He straightens up with a smile on his face. He quickly heads back towards the table.)**

**Mr Gamfield:** What will you give me to take him, gentlemen? Don't be too hard on a poor man! What will you give?

**Mr Limbkins:** I should say that three pounds and ten shillings is plenty.

**Man:** That's ten shillings too much!

**Mr Gamfield:** **(desperately)** Come on! Say four pounds, gentlemen. Say four pounds and you've got rid of him for good!

**Mr Limbkins:** **(firmly)** Three pounds ten.

**Mr Gamfield:** **(pleading)** Come on! I'll split the difference, gentlemen. Three pounds and fifteen shillings.

**Mr Limbkins:** **(sternly)** Not a farthing more.

**Mr Gamfield:** **(looking glum)** You're desperately hard on me, gentlemen.

**Man:** Nonsense! He'd be cheap with no payment at all! Take him, you silly man. He's just the boy for you. He needs discipline – it will do him good. Keeping him doesn't have to be expensive – he's been underfed since he was born! **(chuckles)**

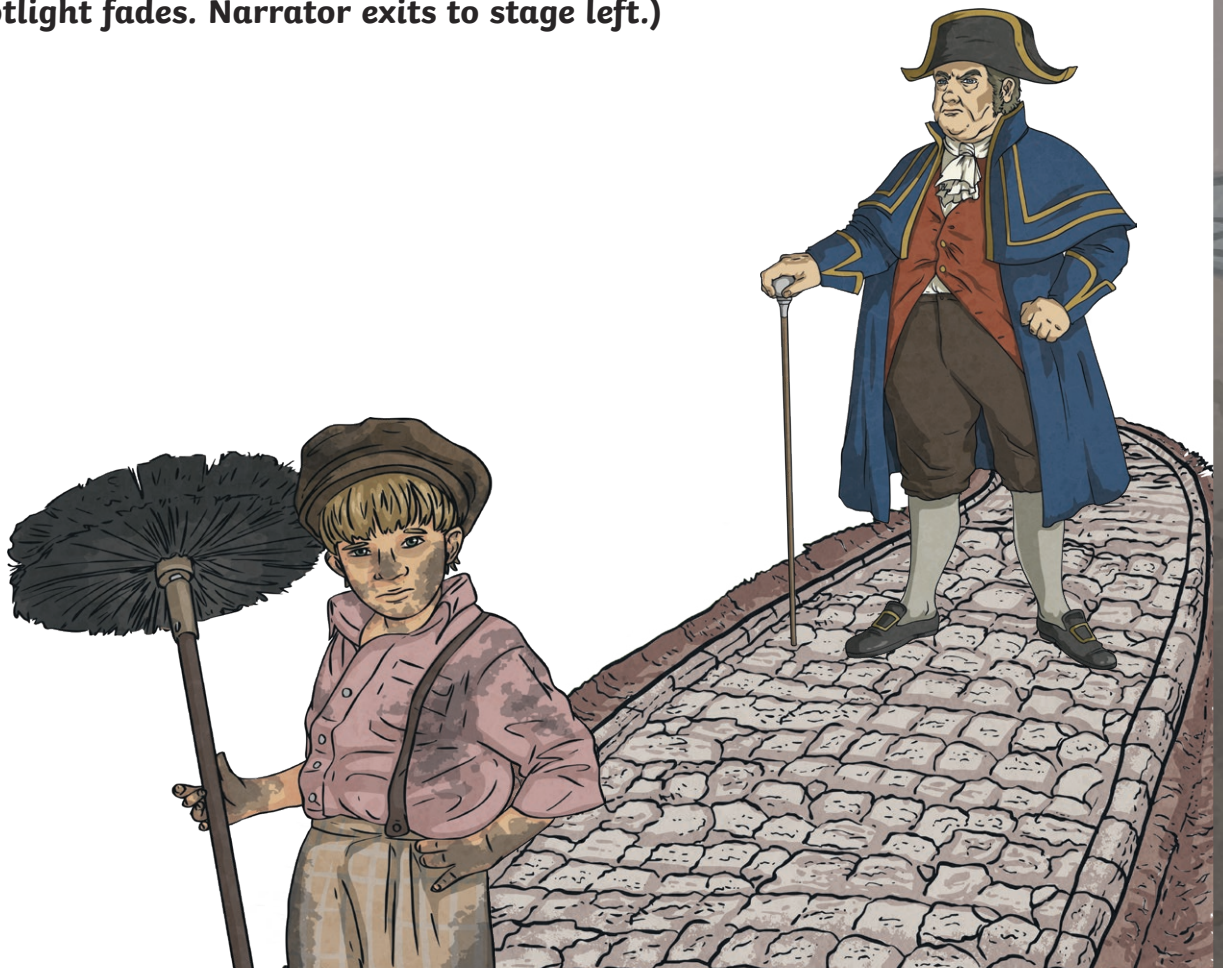
**(Mr Gamfield looks backwards and forwards between the two men's faces; they are both smiling. After a pause, he also smiles. Mr Gamfield reaches out his hand and both men shake it.)**

**Mr Gamfield:** I'll be back to pick him up this afternoon!

**(Narrator enters from stage right and stands in front of the curtains as they close. All lights dim except for one spotlight, which shines on Narrator.)**

**Narrator:** The deal has been made. Straight away, Mr Bumble demands that Oliver is released from the room. He orders Oliver to put on a clean shirt. "Eat your food and be thankful!" he tells Oliver. "You're leaving." And so it is: Oliver Twist is to become a chimney sweep's helper.

**(Spotlight fades. Narrator exits to stage left.)**



# Questions

1. How much money does Mr Gamfield eventually agree to? Tick one.

- ☐ ten shillings
- ☐ three pounds and ten shillings
- ☐ three pounds and fifteen shillings
- ☐ four pounds

2. Number the events 1-5 to show the order they happen in the stage directions.

- ☐ Narrator exits to stage right.
- ☐ Narrator exits to stage left.
- ☐ Mr Gamfield walks away with a hunched back.
- ☐ Mr Gamfield and the man in the white waistcoat smile to greet one another.
- ☐ Mr Gamfield leaves the donkey outside.

3. Find and copy **two** words to describe the room in which Oliver was locked by Mr Limbkins.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_

4. How does Mr Gamfield arrive at the workhouse?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. **(Mr Gamfield reaches out his hand and both men shake it.)**

Why do both men shake his hand?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. **For a week after the terrible crime of asking for more supper...**

Do you think that Oliver had committed a terrible crime? Explain your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Summarise what happens in this extract in 20 words or fewer.

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8. The author has named this scene **An Offer for Oliver**.

Choose a new name for this scene and explain why you have chosen it.

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