

## Oliver Twist (Fagin's last night)

**Lesson type – reading (with speaking extension; debate)**

**Level – Advanced.**

Main Aim –	Debating/discussing persuasively
Subsidiary Aim –	Reading text for gist (understanding mood, and scanning) and detail.
Materials –	Materials 1 & 2; can copy back to back.
Time –	90-120 minutes (if discussion or debate) over 2 lessons.
Suggested timetable fit -	(a) With the topic of crime & punishment.  (b) As a stand-alone lesson, focussing on debating a contemporary issue.

Procedure

Stage and stage aim(s)	Timing	Interaction	Procedure
<b>Focus on topic</b> (introduction of topic of crime & punishment)	10	T – st  st – st  T - st	Ask sts if crime is more of a problem of the city or countryside. Are their criminal gangs in the capital city of their country (countries)? Sts in groups compile a list of crimes such gangs are usually involved in (petty or serious), and how such crimes are usually punished. Feedback
<b>Pre-teach vocabulary</b> (to help in the reading tasks)	5	T - st	Suggested list of 6 items to pre-teach: <i>Scaffold</i> (from a picture, ideally of a building site. It supports something) <i>Gallows</i> (extend from the above, it supports the rope. Another picture?) <i>Snare/snared</i> (picture of a rabbit snare?) <i>Condemn/Condemned</i> (pass sentence, especially death sentence. Also a building, to be destroyed) <i>Countenance</i> (another word for 'face') <i>Swoon</i> (another word for 'faint')
<b>Gist reading</b> (for sts to develop the skill of skimming for main ideas)	12	T – st  st  st – st	Handout materials 1 (ideally, copy pages 1 & 2 back to back, and staple page 3. Fold the whole in half, so the passage is hidden). Direct sts to read the introduction, and see if the law in England is similar to that of their country/-ies. Brief feedback on this. Ask students to read the passage and jot down 3 adjectives to describe how Fagin feels. Set time limit of 6 minutes. Groups of 3 compare adjectives.

		T - st	Feedback. Suggested adjectives: <i>frightened, fearful, terrified, confused, desperate, lonely, deluded, unrepentant, etc</i>
<b>Detailed reading</b> (for deeper understanding of the text)	12	T - st	Students consider exercise 2 alone. Pairs compare answers. Feedback (1; False, Fagin doesn't notice Oliver until line 34. 2; he thinks Oliver crying will make his getaway more believable. 3; because of the audience, come to see the hanging. 4; 'jailer', line 13. 5; 'spend', possibly 'waste'.)
<b>Gist reading 2</b> (spur arguments for/against death penalty)	8	st st – st T - st	Hand out materials 2. Give students 5 minutes to scan the passages and match them to the summaries below. Pairs check Feedback. (Texts A – C are based on news reports)
<b>Speaking 1</b> (brainstorming)	13	st - st	Tell students next lesson they will debate the death penalty. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 (it could be according to their positions, or even counter to these). Students brainstorm arguments to support their position, and anticipate opponents' arguments, and their answers. Teacher to give support with ideas/vocabulary. Materials 2 is a source, too.
<b>Homework</b> (further collection of ideas)	?	st	Students think of more ideas, ideally using internet research.
<b>Speaking 2</b>	30-60	st – st	This can be run as a debate in class (2 groups chosen, rest as audience – allow Q&A session) or in front of other classes, or as group discussions in class (2 'pro' and 2 'anti' in new groups). Induction into conventions of debate may be needed. Additional preparation time should be allowed first, possibly a slot for inputting language of debating/persuading, and there should be time for feedback, too.

**Note:** The issue of Fagin's religion could be problematic in some classes. In line 27 he is referred to by the author as 'The Jew', as is the case through much of the first half of the novel. A Jewish lady wrote to Dickens to protest at this foregrounding of Fagin's religion, and the negative image it threw on his co-religionists. He happened to be redrafting the novel at the time, for publication in book form, and he made alterations based on this, changing 'The Jew' to 'Fagin' in many places. In this passage, Fagin is referred to by the author as 'The Jew' only once, by his name 7 times, and as 'the condemned criminal' once. Other characters use his name, only. Thus, it can be seen that Dickens took on board the point made, and took action to lessen the impression that this monster could be seen as somehow representative.

Note also that Twist invites Fagin to pray with him, which has been seen by some as an attempt at conversion. Nothing comes of it, and Twist is only an innocent boy, a *very* (unnaturally?) innocent boy!

Many views on Fagin's Jewishness are expressed on the internet. A mature class interested in the matter may like to explore this avenue, and it could be extended wider to other representations of Jews in English literature, or of 'otherness' more widely. See the works of Edward Said, for example.