**From Oliver Twist, Oliver wants some more, pp. 302-304 (text book 1+2)**

Although the "farming house" is supposed to exist to raise the children of deceased parents, it mainly serves to keep these children "out of the way." Many of the children die before they even reach adulthood, meaning that the state no longer has to look out for them or take care of them. Those children that do, almost by accident, survive to "grow up" will simply be placed in the workhouse, to labor alongside other paupers—and to be shelved, similarly, out of sight of the general populace.

Oliver's iconic last name was invented by Bumble and assigned to him—much of the novel, indeed, will be a search for Oliver's origins, for his "true name." It should be noted, too, that conceptions of "adolescence," or teenage years, did not exist at this time, nor did child labor laws. From the age of nine, Oliver is expected to work like an adult.

Some trades were reserved specifically for children, as they involved small, repetitive actions that would better be practiced by those with lots of time and small hands. The picking of oakum is one of these trades; and it is irrelevant whether or not Oliver agrees to this assignment—he has no choice in the matter.

An iconic scene in the novel. Oliver dares do what no one else does—this is an indication that Oliver possesses "heroic" qualities—that he is a beacon of virtue toward which other characters in the novel seem to gravitate. Oliver's decision to ask for more—to think that he might deserve more or that the world might be willing to give him more—precipitates his leaving the workhouse, and his journey through the world and into London.

The man in the white waistcoat will repeat his refrain, of "hanging for Oliver," numerous times. Of course, it is not Oliver but several of the criminals around him, namely Sikes and Fagin, who will be hanged later on.

**The exploitation of children: Dickens and Verga. Rosso Malpelo, pp. 306 (text book 1+2)**

The present extract is taken from *Rosso Malpelo*, a short novel by G.Verga. The text is about children’s exploitation and is useful for reflecting on that theme in comparison with the previous extract from *Oliver Twist*.

First of all I analyze main characters: the two protagonists are both young, poor and orphan. The children share their condition of young exploitation and hard-working in bad conditions.

One can’t forget England had just tested the consequences of the Industrial Revolution on social classes while southern Italy suffered its backwardness in respect to the north and paid the costs of a feudal agriculture and the mistreatment of mineral resources; so two characters fostered the development of the exploitation of children.

C.Dickens and G.Verga chose to support Realism poetry (Verism in Italy with Verga), without hiding the awareness of the disarming misery the social contexts were invaded by: this is witnessed thanks to the use of a semantic field made up of words like “pelle, minatore, arnesi, piccone, zappa, lanterna, sacco, pane, fiasco del vino”

**Charles Dickens, The definition of a horse p. 309-311 (textbook 1+2)**

"Murdering the Innocents" replaces the suspense of the previous chapter by establishing names and identities for the previously anonymous social roles that were presented earlier. As is to be expected from Dickens, the names of the characters are emblematic of their personality; usually, Dickens' characters can be described as innocent, villainous or unaware of the moral dilemmas of the story that surrounds them. The characters' names are almost always an immediate indication of where the character fits on Dickens' moral spectrum. Thomas Gradgrind, "a man of realities" is a hard educator who grinds his students through a factory-like process, hoping to produce graduates (grads). Additionally, Gradgrind is a "doubting Thomas"much like the Biblical apostle who resisted belief in the resurrection, this Thomas urges that students depend exclusively upon the evidence in sight. He dismisses faith, fancy, belief, emotion and trust at once. Mr. M'Choakumchild is plainly villainous and he resembles the sort of fantastic ogres he'd prefer students took no stock in.

Cecilia (Sissy) Jupe is unlike the other characters in almost every possible way. While there are other female students, she is the only female identified thus far in the novel. Unlike the boy "Bitzer" (who has the name of a horse), Sissy has a nickname and at least in this chapter, she is the lone embodiment of "fancy" at the same time that she is the single female presented as a contrast to the row of hardened mathematical men. Her character is, of course, a romanticized figure. Despite the political critique of Dickens' simplification and over-idealization of females and children (and girls, especially), Cecilia's character does have some depth that allows her development later in the novel. Her last name, "Jupe," comes from the French word for "skirts" and her first name, Cecilia, represents the sainted patroness of music. Especially as she is a member of a traveling circus, we can expect Cecilia to represent "Art" and "Fancy" in contrast to M'Choakumchild, one of 141 schoolmasters who "had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs."

Besides the allusion to St. Cecilia, Dickens alludes to Morgiana, a character in the classic story "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves"one of the Arabian Nights tales. The reader should always note the irony in Dickens' allusions: while Dickens' characters argue against fanciful literature, Dickens' is relying upon it to compose his story. In this case, Dickens' simile presents M'Choakumchild's search for "the robber Fancy" in terms of Morgiana's searching for (and hiding of) the thieves in "Ali Baba." The metaphor of the children as eager "vessels" is made explicit when the "vessels" before M'Choakumchild become the "jars" before Morgiana. And the motif of robbers and villains is finalized when we remember that Ali Baba and the forty thieves were more hero than criminal. M'Choakumchild is labeled "gentleman" but his intention to seek and destroy "the robber Fancy lurking within" makes "the robber Fancy" (childish imagination) a more noble personification. Instead, the teachers are the ones who seem criminal.

The most important allusion of the chapter is the title: "Murdering the Innocents." The reader should expect Dickens work to be full of Biblical and Christian allusions as he is writing to a largely sentimental popular audience. While the reference may be more inaccessible, erudite or unrecognizable for modern young readers, Dickens' 1854 British audience immediately saw the reference to King Herod. Soon after the birth of Christ, Herod fears for his throne and has all of the male babies in Bethlehem executed (in the hopes of murdering the Christ child). In literary circles, the phrase "murder of the innocents" is exclusively used to describe this Biblical story. While the students are not literally danger (M'Choakumchild), their childish imagination has been targeted for annihilation. This completes the archetype of youth vs. age, and foreshadows that whoever is being targeted and singled out (Cecilia Jupe and her imagination) will ultimately escape this tyrant, but other innocents will be less fortunate (Bitzer). But we might expect as much from the same author who had written *A Christmas Carol* a decade before.

The major theme of the chapter can be easily inferred from Dickens' description of Cecilia in the classroom. The "horses" and carpeted "flowers" are all double symbols of her femininity and youth, but most important, Cecilia represents Art in opposition to mechanization. Dickens is not arguing against education, science or progress. He is arguing against a mode of factory-style, mind-numbing, grad-grinding production that takes the fun out of life. But even worse than the loss of "fun" or "leisure," Dickens is arguing that art requires an inquisitive and desiring mind. Especially as Dickens is known to have read and enjoyed Arabian Nights in his youth, we can see a bit of autobiography in his tender treatment of Ceciliaperhaps if he had come under a Mr. M'Choakumchild, he would have proved incapable of becoming an artist.