**Lesson 1: Introducing Oliver Twist**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to introduce *Oliver Twist* to the students and consider the central themes and motifs used in the text. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the context of *Oliver Twist* and the effect it has on the book
2. Be able to talk about the idea of Victorian class hierarchy and how we see it in the book
3. Be able to critically examine the ways in which Dickens plays on unconscious biases in the novel, considering how he shapes and contradicts our views and preconceptions of the characters in the story

**Plan:**

* Begin the class with a general discussion of the book. What did the students enjoy about the book? What did they not enjoy? What was interesting about the way the book was written? Ask the students to note down three things they liked and three things they did not and discuss this as a class
* Discuss the context of *Oliver Twist.* Ask the class to think about poverty in Victorian London, and about Oliver’s life as an orphan. Introduce ideas about how children were treated in Victorian England, watching the Horrible Histories video to give more context on the period
* Introduce some information about Charles Dickens. Knowing all this, why do they think he might have chosen to write a story like *Oliver Twist?* What do they think he might be trying to say about Victorian society?
* Now introduce the idea of Victorian class hierarchy, thinking about Oliver’s journey from the workhouse to becoming a gentleman. Which characters embody each different class? Are there any characters that challenge our assumptions?
* Complete the poverty log, tracking incidents throughout the book where the theme of poverty is apparent. The class should also go over how to write a star paragraph on this subject, linking it to the context studied in the lesson
* **As a finishing activity, introduce a debate. The students should have five minutes to prepare their response. The debate should be centred around the question ‘is a gentleman born or made in *Oliver Twist*?’. Separate the students in half, with one half arguing for and one half arguing against. Facilitate and engage with this debate, ensuring students respond to each other’s points and are evidencing their ideas.**

**Homework:** Choose between question A, question B and question C, remembering to use examples in the text and the context of the novel to back up your answers.

Question A: **In what ways does *Oliver Twist* challenge our assumptions about people?**

Question B: Which character challenges our preconceptions and prejudices about them the most throughout the novel?

Question C: What is the moral of the story in *Oliver Twist?*

**Lesson 2: Exploring Themes and Narrative**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to enable to students to think more broadly about the way in which *Oliver Twist* is written. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to think thematically, explaining the way in which themes are explored and developed in *Oliver Twist* and debating the role of the themes within the novel, using P.E.E. to write a mini essay paragraph based on this analysis
2. Be able to confidently identify the effect of narrative voice in the novel
3. Be able to get inside the characters’ heads in the novel, using inference to think more deeply about who the characters are under the surface

**Plan:**

* **Start the lesson by compiling a list as a class of all the themes they can find in *Oliver Twist.* Each student should select the three themes they think are the most important in the novel and share their ideas**
* **Each student should pick one theme (i.e. love, poverty, friendship, crime etc.) and find two instances where that theme is explored in the book**
* **Ask each student to come up with a one-line answer to the question ‘how does Dickens present the theme of […] in *Oliver Twist?’* in relation to their chosen theme, using Point, Evidence, Explain to write a mini essay paragraph on it**
* **Ask the class to consider the narrative voice in *Oliver Twist.* What do we mean by narrative voice? Whose voice is the story told through? Is it written in the past or present tense? Is it written in first or third person? What effect does that have on the tone of the novel? Does the narrator appear to be more sympathetic to some characters than others?**
* **Consider the passage where Oliver and the Artful Dodger meet for the first time. We see this passage from Oliver’s perspective. How might it be different from the Artful Dodger’s perspective? Pull out some quotes that show Oliver’s innocence to examine this**
* **Discuss the dramatic technique of hot-seating, where one member of the class should try to get into character as the Artful Dodger and each other member of the class should ask them pre-prepared questions about their first encounter with Oliver, or about any other moment throughout the book that they would want to hear from his perspective**
* **Each student should, using the information they have gained about the Artful Dodger’s perspective, re-write the passage of his first encounter with Oliver from his point of view. They should think about the different words he might use, the way he might describe Oliver, and about how to convey his underlying motivations in inviting Oliver to come meet Fagin. This should be written in the form of a diary, so remember to go over the conventions of a diary quickly before they start this task**
* **Once each student has finished, they should share and compare with class and see if they thought of similar ways in which to portray this encounter**

**Homework:** Chose a different character (i.e. Fagin, Nancy, Mr Bumble, Mr Brownlow etc.) and pick a key scene between them and Oliver. Write a diary entry from that character’s perspective of that day, remembering to think about how their language might be different from the language used in the book and paying attention to how this character feels about Oliver and the events of the scene.

**Lesson 3: Close Textual Analysis**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will aim to make students more comfortable with close textual analysis and how to incorporate it into their essays. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to describe the effect of Dickens’ style, language and structure
2. Be able to use close textual analysis when analysing excerpts from *Oliver Twist,* linking their analysis to wider themes within the book
3. Be able to analyse the character arc of one particular character, Nancy, thinking about the symbolic role she takes on in the book and about the theme of tragedy in relation to her

**Plan:**

* Open the lesson with a conversation about the central characters of *Oliver Twist.* The students should compile a list of three adjectives to describe each character. How have they come to these conclusions? What evidence can they offer to support these opinions?
* Think about the role of villains in *Oliver Twist.* Ultimately is Fagin or Bill Sykes the true villain of the piece? Why? What evidence supports this?
* Ask the class whether they think the novel has many complex characters or whether it is far more morally black and white. Why might Dickens have done this?
* Open a discussion on the concept of inference. Are the class familiar with this term? Why is it an important concept? What does it entail? How can we infer when themes are being discussed or commented upon?
* Look at the example answers to essay questions and analyse them as a class
* Turn to the extract where Oliver is caught stealing. As a class, run through and analyse the language. Using a model answer, pick out any particularly powerful uses of language or literary techniques. What themes is Dickens trying to communicate here?
* Each student should write a P.E.E. paragraph answering the question of how Dickens uses language here to create a sense of chaos.
* Now, open a discussion on character arcs. Do the students know how to analyse or depict a character arc? Consider this through plotting the journey of Nancy.
* Introduce the concept of tragedy. In what ways is Nancy a tragic character? What does she represent in the book? Would Victorian readers have felt the same about Nancy? Why or why not? How does this link to Victorian class hierarchy?
* The class should imagine being a Victorian newspaper writer. How might you portray Nancy’s murder? They should write the opening paragraph of a newspaper article on her death, thinking about Victorian ideas around class and women
* As a finishing activity, the class should try to sum up *Oliver Twist* in one sentence. How would they describe this book if they had to write this concisely?

**Homework:** Choose between question A, question B and question C, remembering to use examples in the text and the context of the novel to back up your answers.

Question A: Is Fagin a one-dimensional, purely evil character or is he more complicated?

Question B: Does Dickens believe that money can buy happiness?

Question C: What does Nancy symbolise in the novel?

**Lesson 4: Mock Exam Paper**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will consolidate the class’s knowledge of *Oliver Twist,* through studying the Haberdashers’ Aske’s entrance exam questions. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the format in which literary analysis arises in entrance exam papers
2. Be able to self-evaluate their own work, using the mark scheme for the exam papers to evaluate what went well and what they could improve on in their literary analysis
3. Be able to analyse a contemporary book review of *Oliver Twist* and draw final conclusions on the purpose of the book from it

**Plan:**

* Begin the lesson by introducing the exam paper, reading through the key extract as a class.
* The students should go through and underline any powerful, telling or revealing words and phrases from the text. Each student should then pick three important words or phrases and write a sentence on the literary effect of each of these
* Now consider any literary techniques within the extract, or any structural features. Go over these as a class, using P.E.E. to analyse the particularly powerful lines in the text
* What questions do they think the examiner might ask about this extract? They should write down three questions that they would ask if they had written this exam.
* Now introduce the questions on the exam paper. Go through each comprehension question one by one, thinking carefully about the places where the examiner asks for inferences to be made or the effect of language to be analysed
* Go through some model examples of answers. Ask the students to evaluate which is the best answer from a selection ranging from low to high ability.
* Now the students should self-evaluate their work, writing two what went wells and two even better ifs, referring to the mark scheme from the exam
* Discuss the layout of the exam, explaining the directed writing section and how this relates to the comprehension and language analysis section of the exam
* The class should imagine they are Oliver looking back on their lives. What would the key three moments be for Oliver from the story? What three moments shape or change him the most and why? They should storyboard this.
* Finish the class with a discussion tying up all our thoughts on the novel. Ask the class “is it important to still read *Oliver Twist* today? Can we learn anything from this novel that we can apply to our lives today?”.

**Homework:** Complete the exam style writing question under timed conditions of thirty minutes, making sure to follow the instructions on the exam paper carefully. The prompt is *“Oliver is in a very dangerous situation in this extract. Write descriptively about a time you have felt afraid.”* It can be based on a real experience, or completely made up, but remember to use lots of vivid language and some literary techniques too!