

## LCM Speech Festival Hong Kong 2023

Prose • 11 - 12 years

An extract from

### **Oliver Twist**

by Charles Dickens

Life in the workhouse was hard. Meals were limited to once a day with the rare exception of a holiday here and there. The boys ate in a large stone hall. A stove stood at one end with a cook constantly stirring the gruel in it. There was never a need to wash the bowls, as the boys licked them clean.

Oliver and his friends never had enough to eat. One day, a new boy came along. He wasn't used to hunger. His father had owned a small cookshop before he had died and left the boy an orphan. The boy's eyes grew wild with hunger. "If I don't get more food, I shall eat one of you."

This frightened all the other boys. Oliver was picked to get more food for this boy. He took his bowl and presented it at the stove. "Please, sir, I want some more." The cook was a nasty man. He couldn't believe his ears. "What did you say?" "Please, sir," repeated Oliver, "I want some more."



The cook crashed the ladle down on Oliver's head and called for Mr Bumble. Bumble was horrified to learn that Oliver had asked for more food. It simply wasn't done. Oliver was locked in his room, and a note was hung on the gate outside the next day. It said: "Offering five pounds to anyone who will take Oliver Twist off the hands of the orphanage."

Poor Oliver was about to be shuffled off once more.