

Oliver Twist

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Every year I reread a Dickens novel; he's my idol; a truly wonderful novelist.

Last year I enjoyed the (short) *Hard Times* again so much - the banking crisis anticipated - that I read a second - *A Tale Of Two Cities*, although I knew the plot so well - and was delighted by how superb it was. So this year - *Oliver Twist*.

Wonderful, dark, so different from the films and musical. Far more evil is Fagin, a vile character. So much more believable is Oliver, inately good, despite temptation. So fabulous is Nancy, so complex; how dare critics say he only paints caricatures?

His second novel (after *Pickwick*); very early Charles - splendid but nowhere near as great as *Bleak House* and *Cities* - my two favourites.