CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

Ragged Dick

Horatio Alger Jr. · *1868 · original English text*

"Wake up there, youngster," said a rough voice. Ragged Dick opened his eyes slowly, and stared stupidly in the face of the speaker, but did not offer to get up. He is a boot-black in New York, and the book will follow his industry, his slang, his temptations, and his wish to be respectable. The hosted text is Alger's original English, Project Gutenberg #5348, complete. For middle grades (catalogue 5–8).

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does this story actually praise when a street boy rises by work, honesty, and a little luck, and how should a school read Alger without flattening the book into a mere success myth?

"Wake up there, youngster," said a rough voice. // Ragged Dick opened his eyes slowly, and stared stupidly in the face of the speaker, but did not offer to get up."

Chapter I, Ragged Dick Is Introduced to the Reader

Dick sleeps late because he went to the Old Bowery on money made by shines. He is slangy, not always tidy, and already at work. The book praises industry, honesty, and the refusal of some kinds of dishonesty, and it also uses luck, a new suit, and a patron. Teach both the virtues and the formula, for grades 5–8. Quote the novel, not only a preface, as the opening. The subtitle in this file is "Street Life in New York with the Boot-Blacks."

KEY CHARACTERS

Ragged Dick
The boot-black of the opening, who sleeps late after the Old Bowery, and who wishes to be respectable

Johnny Nolan
A companion of the early street life

Micky Maguire
A rival in the later "battle and a victory"

The porter of Spruce Street
The rough voice that first says, "Wake up there, youngster"

SEVEN O'CLOCK, AND A SHINE

> *"Wake up there, youngster," said a rough voice. // Ragged Dick opened his eyes slowly, and stared stupidly in the face of the speaker, but did not offer to get up."*
>
> Chapter I

Grades 5–8
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Wake Up There, Youngster

CHAPTER I

A porter on Spruce Street rouses Dick at seven. Dick should have been up an hour ago. He went to the Old Bowery and did not turn in till past twelve. He made the money by shines.

- The first spoken line is exact: "Wake up there, youngster," said a rough voice
- Chapter I is titled "Ragged Dick Is Introduced to the Reader."
- A preface stands in this file; quote the scene, not the preface, as the opening of the story
- Dick is already a worker, and already a boy who stays out late; both facts are on the first page

> *"Wake up there, youngster," said a rough voice. // Ragged Dick opened his eyes slowly, and stared stupidly in the face of the speaker, but did not offer to get up."*
>
> Chapter I

02

Street Life, and a Wish to Rise

THE EARLY CHAPTERS

Johnny Nolan, a new suit, Chatham Street and Broadway, a pocket-book: the early book is the street, the work, and the first chances. Dick would like to be respectable, and he does not always know how.

- Keep the place-names: Chatham Street, Broadway, Madison Square, Mott Street, the Old Bowery
- The new suit is a turning in appearance, and a temptation to vanity; the book watches both
- Industry is praised; so is a kind of street honor among boys
- For grades 5–8; slang is in the dialogue; it is the book's voice, not a mistake

03

Honesty under Temptation

THE MIDDLE OF THE BOOK

A victim of misplaced confidence, a tutor, a battle and a victory, Micky Maguire: Dick is tested in money, in fights, and in whether he will cheat. The book wants him to refuse the cheat.

- The moral center is honesty in small things, not only a lucky meeting
- A tutor and the first lesson belong to the wish to be educated, not only to be rich
- Do not treat every episode as a mere step on a ladder; some are tests of character
- Teach the fights without making them the point of the book

04

A Rise, and a Formula

THE LATER CHAPTERS, AND THE CLOSE

Help comes, and work continues. The close is a rise in respectability. Teach the virtues the book praises, and also name the formula: luck and a patron play their part, alongside industry.

- Do not invent a last-page fortune the book does not give, and do not hide the help it does give
- A Christian school may praise the industry and the honesty, and still notice that luck is in the plot
- The book is a story of a particular boy, not a promise that every life will go the same way
- The subtitle remains "Street Life in New York with the Boot-Blacks"; the street is not erased

05

The Hosted File

PG #5348

The hosted text is complete, original English, 1868, by Horatio Alger Jr. For grades 5–8.

- Quote the opening scene, not only the preface
- Keep Dick's slang as printed when you cite him
- Later Alger books, including some in later waves, are separate stories; this file is Ragged Dick
- Teach industry and honesty, and do not flatten the book into a mere success myth

Industry | Honesty | A Wish to Be Respectable | Street Life | Temptation Refused | Help, and a Formula

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 5–8

1. The story opens: "Wake up there, youngster," said a rough voice. Ragged Dick opened his eyes slowly. Chapter I is "Ragged Dick Is Introduced to the Reader." A preface stands earlier; quote the scene, not the preface.
2. This is Alger's original English, 1868, PG #5348, complete. The subtitle is "Street Life in New York with the Boot-Blacks." For grades 5–8.
3. The book praises industry, honesty, and a refusal to cheat. It also uses luck and a patron. Teach both the virtues and the formula; do not flatten it into a mere success myth.
4. Dick is already a worker on the first page, and already a boy who stayed out late at the Old Bowery. Both facts matter.
5. Keep the place-names (Chatham Street, Broadway, Mott Street, Spruce Street) and Dick's slang as printed.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #5348, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/ragged-dick/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.