A Tale of Two Cities Study Guide

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

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Introduction

A Tale of Two Cities occupies a central place in the canon of Charles Dickens's works. TIns novel of the French Revolution was originally serialized in the author's own periodical *All the Year Round* Weekly publication of chapters 1-3 of Book 1 began on April 30, 1859. In an innovative move, Dickens simultaneously released installments of the novel on a monthly basis, beginning with all of *Book* 1 in June and concluding with the last eight chapters of *Book* 3 in December. Dickens took advantage of the novel's senal publication to experiment with characterization, plot, and theme. He described the work in a letter to his friend John Forster, cited in Ruth Glancy's *A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens's Revolutionary Novel,* as "a picturesque story rising in every chapter, with characters true to nature, but whom the story should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue." The novel that emerged from his experimentation is now regarded as one of Dickens's most popular and most innovative works.

Dickens's work was very popular with the reading public when it was first published. One review in the magazine *Athenaeum* stated that *A Tale of Two Cities* had attracted the praise of a hundred thousand readers On the other hand, a whole set of critics, most notably Sir James Fitzjames Stephen writing in *Saturday Review,* criticized the novel precisely for its popularity. "Most of the critics writing in the intellectual and literary journals of the day considered popular success a good reason to condemn a work," explains Glancy. "If the public liked it, they certainly could not be seen to approve of it at all" Modern critical opinion, however, has given the novel an important place among Dickens's most mature works of fiction.

Author Biography

From the time he was twenty-one, Charles Dickens knew he would not be the great actor he had imagined, nor even the journalist he next attempted to be. Instead, he felt he was destined to become a great novelist He not only had experiences with the same joys and tragedies his characters would have, but he also had the great talent to make his readers feel and see all these experiences in detail. The second of eight children of John and Elizabeth Dickens, Charles was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England. His early childhood was a happy one. Though plagued by frequent illnesses, his first years were also filled with exciting stories told to him by his parents and his nurse.

However, when Dickens was twelve, his family moved to London, where his father was imprisoned for debts he could not pay. Charles was forced to go to work pasting labels on bottles at a bootblack factory. Although this job lasted less than a year, he often felt hungry and abandoned, especially compared to his sister Frances, who continued studying at the Royal Academy of Music, where she was winning awards. For Dickens, the injustice was almost more than he could stand, and his suffering was multiplied by his mother's delight about the job that he always remembered with hatred.

Although his critics are the first to say that *Great Expectations* is not directly autobiographical, Dickens's own words tell us that he resented having to work in the factory. where he dreamed of the better life he felt he deserved, much as Pip is eager to leave Joe's forge. Also, Dickens's essay "Travelling Abroad" describes a small boy who rides in a coach with Dickens past his grand house, Gad's Hill. Although the boy in the essay does not know Dickens or that this is the great author's house, he remarks that his father has told him that hard work will earn him this house, which Dickens had also admired for years before finally being able to afford it in 1856. Dickens's familiarity with youthful expectations and later-life remembrances of them are clear in this reflection.

Likewise, Dickens's first love for Maria Beadnell so impressed him by its horrible failure that even years later he could barely speak of it to his friend and biographer, John Forster. All that Dickens had written about her he later burned. He believed that Maria had rejected him because of social class differences, since Dickens had not yet established his writing career at the time and Maria's father was a banker. Decades later, his character Miss Havisham would burn, shooting up flames twice her size, in compensation for her cold heart

Dickens's marriage to Catherine (Kate) Hogarth, the daughter of a newspaper editor, in 1836 produced ten children. Their union ended in separation in 1858, however. By the time *Great Expectations* was published in 1860, Dickens had known his mistress Ellen Ternan-an actress he had met when he became interested in the stag for several years, and he established a separate household in which he lived with Ternan. It would not be until after the author's death, however, that Dickens's daughter would make the affair public. Ternan was twenty-seven years younger than Dickens, a fact that resembles the age difference between the happy, later-life couple Joe and Biddy in *Great*

Expectations. Dickens protected his privacy because he was worried about his reputation as a respected writer and the editor of *Household Words,* a family magazine. Such turmoil and ecstasy in Dickens's intimate relationships have since been compared to the misery and bliss of couples in his novels.

If anything, D1ckens's descriptions of suffering were and still are his chief endearing quality to readers who find them both realistic and empathetic. Beginning with *Bleak House* in 1852, Dickens is widely acknowledged to have entered a "dark period" of writing. Yet he seemed to enjoy his continuing popularity with readers and to ignore his critics' remarks that his stories were too melodramatic. While readers have long accepted that tendency, they have also warmed to Dickens's love of humor.

Critics suggest that the part of Dickens's life that is most reflected in *A Tale of Two Cities* is his personal relationships with his wife and Ellen Ternan. In 1855, he reestablished contact with his childhood sweetheart Maria Beadnell, but he was very disappointed with their meeting and depicted his disillusionment in the 1857 novel *Little Dorrit.* A quarrel W1th his publishers Bradbury & Evans over his mistress's reputation led D1ckens to turn to a new publishing house, Chapman & Hall, to publish *A Tale of Two Cities.* Some critics suggest that Dickens's depiction of Lucie Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities* and the behavior of the two principal characters, Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay, toward her, reflects his own attitude toward Ternan.

Dickens died of a brain aneurysm in June 1870. Although he had expressly wished to be buried at his country home, Gad's Hill, his request was disregarded, apparently owing to his fame. Instead, he was buried in the Poets' Comer of Westminster Abbey, London.

Plot Summary

Book One: Recalled to Life

On a cold November night in 1775, Mr. Jarvis Lorry, who works for Tellson's Bank, tells a messenger who stops his mail coach to return with the message, "Recalled to Life," in *A Tale of Two Cities.* That evening in a Dover hotel he meets Miss Lucie Manette, a young woman whom Lorry brought to England as an orphaned child many years earlier and whom he is now to return with to France to recover her father, recently released from prison after eighteen years.

In Paris, Mr. Lorry and Miss Manette arrive at the wine shop of Madame and Monsieur Defarge. In a top floor garret room above the shop, working away at a shoemaker's bench, sits an old, white-haired man, too feeble and too altered to recognize his daughter. With the help of Lorry and Defarge, Lucie takes Dr. Manette away in a carriage to return him to London.

Book Two: The Golden Thread

On a March morning in 1780, Mr. Charles Darnay is being tried at the Old Bailey for treason. In the court as witnesses are Dr. Manette and his daughter Lucie, who testifies that on the night five years earlier when she was returning with her father from France, the prisoner comforted her and her father aboard the boat on which they crossed the channel. Darnay is acquitted after the counsel for the defense, Mr. Stryver, befuddles a witness by presenting Mr. Sydney Carton, who so closely resembles Mr. Darnay that the witness is unable to stand by his story. Mr. Jerry Cruncher, messenger for hire, rushes the news of the acquittal to Tellson's Bank, as he was instructed to do by Mr. Lorry. Outside the courtroom, everyone congratulates Darnay on his release.

In France, meanwhile, both the abuses of the aristocracy and the furor of the oppressed grow. Monseigneur, the Marquis St. Evremonde, "one of the great lords in power at the court," drives off in a gilded carriage and runs over a child. He tosses a gold coin to the child's grieving father, Gaspard. Someone throws a coin at the carriage, but when the Marquis looks to see who, he sees only Madame Defarge, knitting. She knits into a scarf growing longer by the day the names in symbols of those who will later die at the hands of the revolutionaries. Later at his chateau, the Marquis asks if "Monsieur Charles" has yet arrived from England. Charles Darnay, the nephew, tells the Marquis that he believes his family has done wrong and that he wishes to redress the wrongs of the past. The Marquis, who scorns Darnay's suggestions, is later found stabbed to death in his bed.

Lucie and her father live in a London apartment with her maid, Miss Pross. Darnay prospers as a teacher in France and visits England frequently. He speaks of his love of Lucie to Dr. Manette, who grants his permission for a marriage, although he refuses to

hear until the wedding day the secret of his identity which Darnay tries to tell him. Sydney Carton, self-described wastrel and unsuccessful suitor, tells Lucie he is "a man who would give his life, to keep a life you love beside you."

At the Defarge wine shop, local anger over the execution of Gaspard and the news that Lucie Manette is about to marry Charles Darnay, a French Marquis, grows. All the women knit.

After Lucie and Darnay go off to honeymoon, Mr. Lorry discovers Dr. Manette making shoes, lapsed into an absent mental state which lasts for nine days while Lucie is away. On the tenth day of Dr. Manette's mania, he recovers, converses with Mr. Lorry about a "friend" who suffered similarly, and agrees to have the things of his old occupation - his shoemaking bench and tools which he had returned to in his distress - destroyed for his mental well-being.

On a July evening in 1789 Lucie Darnay, now the mother of a six-year-old girl, sits and worries over the future. Mr. Lorry speaks of the run on Tellson's Bank as a consequence of the turmoil in Paris. There citizens storm the Bastille to free its seven prisoners. Among them are Madame and Monsieur Defarge, who find Manette's old cell. The people of St. Antoine hang a man named Foulon, who had once told the starving people to eat grass. They seek out aristocrats with a frenzy. One evening they burn down the chateau of the Marquis.

The chateau was left to itself to flame and burn. In the roaring and raging of the conflagration, a red-hot wind, driving straight from the infernal regions, seemed to be blowing the edifice away. With the rising and falling of the blaze, the stone faces showed as if they were in torment. When great masses of stone and timber fell, the face with the two dints in the nose became obscured' anon struggled out of the smoke again, as if it were the face of the cruel Marquis, burning at the stake and contending with the fire.

In August of 1792, Mr. Lorry is about to embark on a trip to Paris to organize accounts there. Darnay learns from him that the bank has been holding an unopened letter addressed to "Monsieur Heretofore the Marquis," whom he says he knows. The letter from Monsieur Gabelle, a servant, begs St. Evremonde/Darnay to come to France to free him from the mob who hold him. Darnay resolves to leave for France, for his honor demands it. He leaves a letter to Lucie, but he does not tell her his identity or purpose.

Book Three: The Track of a Storm

On his way to Paris, Darnay is captured, imprisoned, charged with being an aristocratic emigrant, now to suffer the justice of the revolution. Lucie and her father have also hastened to France to meet Mr. Lorry at Tellson's Paris bank. Dr. Manette uses his influence as one formerly imprisoned to calm the revolutionaries and to have Darnay's life spared during the Reign of Terror when the King and Queen and 1100 others lose

their lives to the guillotine. Yet shortly thereafter, Darnay is again arrested, charged by the Defarges and "one other."

Miss Pross and Jerry Cruncher, with the Manettes in Paris, come upon a man on the streets whom they identify as Miss Pross's lost brother. Sydney Carton then pursues the man's identity to reveal that he is John Barsad, who had been involved in Darnay's trial in England and who had spied for the English. Carton uses this knowledge as leverage to persuade Barsad, a turnkey at the prison, to work for him.

At the second trial, Darnay is denounced by the Defarges and "the other," who is no other than Dr. Manette himself! Defarge tells how when he stormed the Bastille, he found in Manette's old cell a paper in Manette's hand in a crevice in the wall. He proceeds to read the paper. Manette's story dates to 1857 when he was summoned by two men, the twin St. Evremondes, to attend to a dying peasant woman and a dying, peasant boy, wounded fighting in her defense. The woman had been raped by the two men. They tried to pay Manette off, but he refused; when he tried to write to authorities regarding their case, they destroyed his letter and threatened to kidnap his wife. He then denounced them and their descendants (and thus Charles Darnay). Darnay is condemned to die within 24 hours.

After Carton takes Lucie home, he visits the Defarges, where Madame Defarge reveals that the woman in Manette's story was her sister. He returns to the Manettes that evening to find that Dr. Manette has this time been unsuccessful in freeing Darnay. Carton instructs Lorry on plans to have the Manettes escape Paris the next day. "The moment I come to you," he says, "take me in and drive away." Carton enters the prison and Darnay's cell with the help of Barsad. He drugs Darnay, then exchanges clothes with him. Barsad caries Darnay out; Carton remains behind. The Manettes, Darnay, and Mr. Lorry all escape in a carriage. Miss Pross and Jerry Cruncher also devise a plan of escape. While Cruncher goes for a carriage, Madame Defarge, armed with a gun and a knife, comes to the apartment to execute Lucie and her daughter, confronts Miss Pross, and dies of a gunshot in the ensuing struggle. Miss Pross and Cruncher escape, the former forever after deaf. Carton is executed as Darnay, willingly giving his life for the one he loves.

Book 1, Chapter 1

Book 1, Chapter 1 Summary

Dickens paints a picture of an ambivalent age, simultaneously the "best of times" and the "worst of times." Life proceeds in both France and England as if there would never be any change. Both France and England have a cruel sense of justice but England, unlike the more repressive France, is suffering under a great deal of criminal disorder. Burglaries and highwaymen continue their unpleasant reign despite the omnipresent hangman. The potential for sudden change was is appreciated by either regime.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Analysis

France and England will be shortly interrupted by the French and American Revolution. Great changes are about to take place, but despite the violence and the desperate punishments of the regimes, nothing dramatic is expected.

Book 1, Chapter 2

Book 1, Chapter 2 Summary

Along Dover road, the Dover mail, a carriage carrying the mail, must make it to the top of the mud-drenched Shooter's Hill. The load is so heavy and the mud so thick, the passengers must assist the coach in getting up the hill. A horseman, by the name of Jerry, mounts the hill at a fast gallop and intrudes in the scene, asking for Mr. Jarvis Lorry. The guards, who are heavily armed, are suspicious of the horseman but they are reassured by the passenger. Mr. Lorry, from Tellson's Bank in London, reads the dispatch and tells Jerry to relay a peculiar message to a lady at Dover. The message- "Recalled to Life."

Book 1, Chapter 2 Analysis

This is a very atmospheric scene, with the dark night, the wayward carriage and the trudging passengers making their way in a dangerous, highwaymen-infested England. The guards on the carriage are alarmed at the horseman. A guard and the driver remark at the strangeness of the message. It is a suspenseful setting for the beginning of a story.

Book 1, Chapter 3

Book 1, Chapter 3 Summary

Dickens comments on how every person remains a mystery of every other person in the world. Jerry is perplexed at the strange message, "Recalled to Life," which he is to deliver to Tellson's Bank. Mr. Jarvis Lorry, still in the Mail coach, speaks with a strange specter and reflects on years of digging, digging after being buried alive for eighteen years. This is his half-dreamt reverie as the coach lumbers towards its destination.

Book 1, Chapter 3 Analysis

Dickens weaves a painful story of life, death and fate, a story heavily colored with deep reflection on the mysteries of life and the ponderous tempo of the late eighteenth century. Yet, here and there, there are flashes of humor and tenderness. In the coach, Mr. Lorry's reflections raise great questions of the purpose of his journey.

Book 1, Chapter 4

Book 1, Chapter 4 Summary

Upon arriving at the Royal George Hotel, Lorry is assured, weather-permitting, there will be a boat to Calais, France, the next day. At breakfast, he makes sure that accommodations are prepared for a young lady arriving the next day. When Miss Lucie Manette arrives, he visits her. He explains to Lucie her that her father, who disappeared so long ago, is not dead as she has been told but is still alive after a long prison stay in the Bastille. He used to be his father's connection to the Bank of Tellson. Of course, like with everything else, his relationship with her father was strictly business. Her father, Doctor Manette, though, is not well, a ghost of his former self. When Miss Manette faints, her attendant, Miss Pross, helps revive her with smelling salts, cold water and vinegar. There is a plan to find her father in France and take him back to England.

Book 1, Chapter 4 Analysis

Lorry is not comfortable with his task of revealing a great secret to Miss Manette. He is simply a mechanical man, he says, a businessperson without feeling. Yet, as with all these characters, one suspects there is a lot of feeling buried in this strange banker, who is haunted by the thought of recalling his old friend, Doctor Manette, back to life. Miss Pross, her attendant, a strong-willed and powerfully protective woman, chastises the banker for intimidating Lucie, her lovely charge.

Book 1, Chapter 5

Book 1, Chapter 5 Summary

A large cask of wine, tumbling out of a cart, draws dozens of Parisians to stoop over the ground sipping the wine before it disappears into the cracks in the earth. This frantic scene typifies the deep poverty and hunger of the common people of France. Hunger is everywhere- on the baker's shelves, with their scanty stock and in the sausage-shops, where dead dogs passed for meat. Dickens now takes us to a wine-shop, owned by Jacques Defarge and attended also by his wife, Madame Defarge, a shrewd and powerful lady, who incessantly knits throughout her day. For life in Paris, there is a prosperous, gregarious place. Lorry and Lucie visit the shop. Lorry finally speaks privately with Defarge. He takes them to a dark garret. Upon approaching the door, Lucie becomes afraid. Finally, the door is opened, giving them their first glimpse of Lucie's father. Doctor Manette is older, white-haired and feeble, who bends over a shoemaker's bench.

Book 1, Chapter 5 Analysis

Dickens paints a grim picture of a famished and thirsty Paris in the moments prior to the Revolution. This unrest is critical to this tale, which pictures ordinary lives afflicted by the oppression and brutality of the ruling class, not just in Paris, but in England as well. The wine-shop is now the center of the intrigue of this story, where the beautiful Miss Lucie is now led to her long-lost ghost of a father, barely a shadow in a dark garret.

Book 1, Chapter 6

Book 1, Chapter 6 Summary

Lucie now meets her father. He has not gotten over the prison. He is bending over his shoemaker's bench making a lady's walking shoe, a task far below his station as an experimental medical practitioner. Lucie strains to see him in the dim light. The former prisoner barely recognizes Defarge, his protector, much less Lorry, his old business associate. When they are finally introduced, he recognizes her hair as similar to a few strands he has kept with him at all times since the prison. Holding him and rocking him with great love and tenderness, she tells Doctor Manette that she is here to rescue him, to take him back to England. Lorry and Defarge get ready for the journey, while Lucie stays with him. As they are leaving, the Doctor mutters, "One Hundred and Five. North Tower." He half thinks is still in the Bastille, France's great prison. Lorry he asks if he is happy to being recalled to life. He replies he is not sure. Manette is a broken, empty man.

Book 1, Chapter 6 Analysis

This is a tender and sad moment for Lucie- for it is quite true that her father is a ghost of a man. He suffers from extreme memory loss, trauma and little or no self-esteem. In a way, the Doctor's condition is a political commentary on the conditions of servitude under a greedy and indifferent aristocracy. Although his long imprisonment will build him some collateral with the regime to come, one will shortly see that the new liberators of Paris have their own sense of extremity, when it comes to treating and evaluating their fellow man. Still, Doctor Manette, at this time, as a former political prisoner, is a symbol of the repression of the old regime just as the partakers of the spilled wine cask were.

Book 2, Chapter 1

Book 2, Chapter 1 Summary

Tellson's Bank is a tiny place with small counters and dingy windows. It is a place of metal boxes with yellowed paper, whose custodians are ancient men with monotonous histories of boring clerkship. Because of Tellson's, many forgers, thieves, and counterfeiters are put to death. The odd-job-man of Tellson's is Jerry Cruncher. In this chapter, Jerry is at odds with his wife who actively prays against some of his current "business." While taking his son to his portering job, his son wonders at the rust that always coats his father's fingers.

Book 2, Chapter 1 Analysis

There are odd things in Jerry Cruncher's humble life. Why is his wife praying so ardently against his affairs, which appear to be mostly devoted to portering? Why is there clay on his boots in the morning when they are clean when he comes home from work? Why is there always rust on his fingers? Jerry Cruncher is a man of mystery.

Book 2, Chapter 2

Book 2, Chapter 2 Summary

An old clerk at Tellson's now gives Jerry an order to go the Court, Old Bailey, where he will be let in through the aid of Mr. Lorry. He will there await his pleasure. They are trying a man for treason today. The punishment for treason is "quartering," in which a partially hanged man is literally split open in a gruesome and barbarous manner and then quartered and decapitated. The prisoner involved is a noble gentleman about twenty-five named Charles Darnay. Lucy and her father are in the Court as witnesses against him.

Book 2, Chapter 2 Analysis

In this chapter, we hear much about the gruesome sense of English justice in this era. The hangman's noose, the whipping post, the act of drawing and quartering are described at length. Against this, there is the sheer surprise of a handsome young prisoner facing a horrible death with Lucie and her father as witnesses against him.

Book 2, Chapter 3

Book 2, Chapter 3 Summary

The case begins. Mr.Attorney-General reveals that Charles Darnay, though young in years, is old in treachery and has passed notes to France for many years. The prosecution's witness is a man of impeccable character named John Barsad. The prisoner's counsel, Mr. Stryver, forces him to admit he had been in debtor's prison, lives off of property whose location he can't, probably cheats at dice and has other character flaws. Still, he had seen the passing of these secret lists by his fellow passenger, Darnay. Roger Cly, a servant of Darnay's, also claims to have seen these lists. Lorry testifies that he had seen the prisoner come on board a ship en route to France. Lucie says how pleasant and helpful the prisoner was to her and her father. But then a witness called by the prosecution to uniquely identify the prisoner as the purveyor of secret information is challenged to by his resemblance to Mr. Carton, the defense lawyer's associate. The inability to identify the prisoner helps with Darnay's ultimate acquittal.

Book 2, Chapter 3 Analysis

The stakes are high for Charles Darnay as two men of low character, Cly and Barsad, bear false witness against him. Dickens describes these proceedings with great irony and contempt as he mocks the way the prosecution creates an idol of nobility of Barsad, who is a contemptible rascal and liar. Here is a characterization of still yet another side of English justice in the manner of the courtroom audience itself, which is vicariously and gruesomely enjoying the young man's possible torturous demise. There is a certain care in Darnay's description of Carton as an intelligent man who is somehow operating beneath his capacity- as depicted by his dress, demeanor and his attitude.

Book 2, Chapter 4

Book 2, Chapter 4 Summary

Charles Darnay is treated to congratulations by Doctor Manette, Lucie, and Mr. Lorry and Mr. Stryver after the trial. Darnay thanks Stryver vigorously for his help. Darnay and Carton dine together. It is clear that Carton, who is a strong drinker, does not like Darnay and makes him uncomfortable. Carton prompts Darnay to toast his pleasure, which, of course, is Lucie Manette. Darnay pays the bill. It seems as though, strangely, Carton envies the acquitted prisoner, perhaps because of Lucie's attitude towards him.

Book 2, Chapter 4 Analysis

This chapter contains a kind of irony regarding the fate of Mr. Charles Darnay. Despite the congratulations he receives, he seems to be the object of envy and perhaps even some kind of undeserved contempt by Mr. Carton, whose resemblance to him and perhaps his help to Mr. Stryker was a partial contributor to his victory.

Book 2, Chapter 5

Book 2, Chapter 5 Summary

Dickens points out the prodigious drinking men did in those days. Mr. Stryver, in fact, as he rose up in the esteem of the Courts and men, had a drinking companion and business ally in the person of Sydney Carton. Sydney would never be a "lion," but he was a very good "jackal," a minor predator of great assistance to his associate lion, Mr. Stryver. He has always been a helper of his colleagues, but never a leader. In their conversation, Sydney denies that Lucie is "pretty" to the consternation of Mr. Stryver. Sydney is a complex and sad, uneven type of man.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Analysis

There are many paragraphs in the few words in which Sydney denies Lucie's "prettiness." One may think that perhaps when Sydney first saw Miss Manette in court that there was an instantaneous attraction and envy of Darnay because of his attraction to Lucie and perhaps reciprocally.

Book 2, Chapter 6

Book 2, Chapter 6 Summary

In a conversation with Miss Pross, Mr. Lorry probes to find out Doctor Manette's conscious relationship to his former imprisonment but finds very little except that the mere mention of those times disturbs him- and he has not disclosed who was responsible for his misfortune, although he conceivably know. Lorry is happy to have found a kind of second home at Doctor Manette's and has learned to even appreciate the possessive Miss Pross. The chapter heading, "Hundreds of People." comes from a comment of Miss Pross to Mr. Lorry regarding the tremendous attraction commanded by her Lucie. Yet, it is only Darnay and Carton who visit. But when a great lightening storm commences, Carton muses that a great crowd is coming into their life and the footsteps running from the rain are approaching them. In fact, nothing could have been more prophetic- and perhaps tragic- the insight having proceeded from Sydney's mouth.

Book 2, Chapter 6 Analysis

This is a quiet chapter, a chapter of about friendships forming and being consolidated; a chapter of personal interactions between participants in Doctor Manette's hospitality. There is a slight edge of mystery in Lorry's questions about the Doctor's recollections. Dickens is obviously setting up some questions in the reader's minds. As the author knows, the flowering of these relationships will lead to a collision point with history.

Book 2, Chapter 7

Book 2, Chapter 7 Summary

Dickens describes the way of one of the great powers in the Court, a man he calls Monseigneur, a man who uses four full-bodied men just to serve him chocolate. He puts his own pleasures, like supper, a Comedy and a Grand Opera, during one evening, for beyond the public business for which he is responsible. In order to further his affairs in a declining situation for the nobility, he allies himself with a Farmer General by marrying off his sister to him. One of his visitors is a man around sixty, a Marquis Evremonde, a man of great paleness and coldness, who leaves the Monseigneur's party with the clatter of horse hoofs. He charges through the streets only to kill a child through the recklessness of his horses. Instead of repenting for his manslaughter, he disparages the crime. Defarge, who comes late to the scene, tries to comfort Gaspard, the father, by saying it is a blessing the child died so quickly. He throws Defarge a gold coin for his comforting philosophy. Defarge's wife stays at the scene, knitting quietly.

Book 2, Chapter 7 Analysis

The nobility, as represented by Monseigneur, are selfish and pampered beyond any kind of human necessity. They put their pleasures- whether of dining or being entertained, of dressing for a Royal Ball or talking with their empty Society- before the affairs of state, while the common people starve around them. Then, we have a stunning picture of the Marquis Evremonde, killing a child with stark, indifference. Ironically, he acts in this arrogant way before the Defarges, committed and ruthless revolutionaries.

Book 2, Chapter 8

Book 2, Chapter 8 Summary

The Marquis Evremonde travels to his village, which has only one street with horrible poverty infesting the people and their businesses. He demands that a man explain why he was so focused on his carriage. The man says that he saw a man attached to his carriage. The man then dove into the river. The Marquis then tells his servant to take care of the matter. A woman petitions the Marquis for a gravestone for her husband. He drives off without answering. Arriving home, he asks if his nephew, Charles, has come.

Book 2, Chapter 8 Analysis

The Marquis Evremonde is consumed with selfishness, content to live among his own people, who are literally dying of want. He treats everyone, including a witness to a possible intruder, with total contempt, assigning any unpleasantries to his servant, Gabelle. Even worse, he ignores the peasant woman's plea for a simple gravestone. His chateau is surrounded with the cries of hunger and desperation to his willfully deaf ears.

Book 2, Chapter 9

Book 2, Chapter 9 Summary

In the massive stone chateau of the Marquis Evremonde, a supper is laid out for the Marquis and Charles Darnay, his visiting nephew. It is an unpleasant encounter for Charles, having returned from England barely with his life, notes that if his Uncle had not been in disgrace with the Royal Court, he would probably have been imprisoned by now. In fact, Charles would not have been surprised if his Uncle had conspired somewhat with his near-death encounter in England. Charles speaks of how his Uncle, as the rest of the family, has mistreated the peasants, there charges. Charles tells his Uncle that he is renouncing his family's property and, even if he did inherit it, would use it to better the life of the people around it. After a difficult night, there is a strange commotion culminating with the Marquis' servant, Gabelle, riding at a gallop behind a servant. A dagger has been driven into the heart of the Marquis Evremonde, master of the Chateau, a knife with a paper, which said "*Drive him fast to his tomb. This from JACQUES.*"

Book 2, Chapter 9 Analysis

Charles Darnay is passionate and just in his assessment of the suffering of his poor countrymen. He has renounced his property and his title for the sake of justice and has taken residence in England, working to support himself, all for the sake of breaking his attachment to the corrupt French aristocracy. Yet, he shows his tragic flaw, a certain level of naiveté in his dealing with his cruel and corrupt uncle. Meanwhile, the nearby countryside swells with unrest. That night, a dagger takes the Marquis Evremonde's life.

Book 2, Chapter 10

Book 2, Chapter 10 Summary

Charles establishes himself as a Tutor of French literature and language. Some of his clients are at Cambridge University. Others are in London. Believing that he has settled the question of livelihood, he then decides to approach Doctor Manette regarding his love for Lucie. His love his deep, abiding and complete, but he wishes the Doctor's approval. He swears that he will not separate Lucie from her father. If Lucie should bring his courtship to the Doctor's attention, will the Doctor urge "no influence" against him? The doctor affirms he will not, but refuses to hear why Charles is in England- until the courtship is resolved and only on the day of his marriage of his marriage to Lucy.

Book 2, Chapter 10 Analysis

Charles' nobility of spirit is reflected in two ways in this chapter. First, he not only renounced his aristocratic roots, but he has proven to the world and to himself that he can engage in a noble livelihood and earns his own way. Secondly, he is careful to assure the Doctor that he will not be excluded through his courtship and possible marriage to Lucie.

Book 2, Chapter 11

Book 2, Chapter 11 Summary

Stryver confesses his intention to marry Lucie to Carton at five o'clock in the morning after one of their own long night work and carousing sessions. He thinks Sydney may have a disparaging view of Lucie as "a golden-haired doll" because of a former comment. Carton denies his disapproval of the idea. He recommends that Carton get married, too.

Book 2, Chapter 11 Analysis

In a comic surprise in this somber story, Stryver, filled with his own self-importance, decides to go after Lucie as a wife. Carton does not disapprove, but seems to view the situation with little concern for an actual outcome in marriage. .

Book 2, Chapter 12

Book 2, Chapter 12 Summary

En route to his extraordinary proposal to Ms. Manette, the self-confident Stryver decides to drop by Mr. Lorry' s at Tellson's. When he explains his magnificent intentions to Lorry, he is struck by Lorry's inexplicable objection to the own idea. Stryver is absolutely floored by Lorry's disapproval. Lorry even takes it upon himself to visit Soho and to report that he has decided that his original objection was certainly right. Stryver takes it quite well and dismisses Lorry perfunctorily during an evening. The end shot is that Lucie is safe.

Book 2, Chapter 12 Analysis

Lorry thinks this union would be a complete mismatch. Readers might agree because if it were to have happened it would have ruined the structure of the novel itself, which hinges on Lucie's marriage to Charles. Perhaps Stryver's ambitions are not so much from deeply felt love but for a social match- and maybe not the best for him. He gives up so easily.

Book 2, Chapter 13

Book 2, Chapter 13 Summary

Sydney Carton is still his despondent, morose self when visiting the Manettes. Nonetheless, he takes comfort in being in the vicinity of the house. One day, he visits Lucie and tells her how, at one moment, he had been inspired by his love of Lucie, but he knew it would come to nothing and he has given up. The one thing he wants her to know that he would give up his life for her or for anyone that she might hold dear. Lucie is touched by his extraordinary devotion to her and dismayed at his inability to change or for her to move him in that direction any further.

Book 2, Chapter 13 Analysis

Carton, of all the heroes in all the books of this world, is probably one of the most selfless when it comes to the ways of love. As a character, his is so despondent, so self-deprecating and so careless with his life that he seems beyond hope. Yet, in this great lack of character, there is this selflessness. This is his unique and redemptive quality.

Book 2, Chapter 14

Book 2, Chapter 14 Summary

In this chapter, Jerry Cruncher's secret trade is revealed. We see him, initially, sitting out on his stool in front of Tellson's Bank, when a funeral procession passes. He joins in the procession for Roger Cly, one of the Old Bailey spies that helped indict Charles Darnay. The mob, which hates these types of spies, joins in and takes over the procession, fearful shopkeepers putting away their wares in its wake. The crowd eventually interns the body at a church cemetery and disperses. Later in the evening, Cruncher leaves for the same church, followed secretly by his son, who wishes to know what his father is doing so late at night. He finds that his father is a "Resurrection-Man," a gravedigger. He and his companions are devotedly digging up a coffin. That is the type of "fishing" that his father is doing at night. Young Jerry, somewhat frightened by the time, as well as their fearful chores, leaves before the coffin is open. Later on, he tells his father that he might someday like to be a Resurrection-Man as well.

Book 2, Chapter 14 Analysis

Now, at last we can see why Jerry's poor wife is always "flopping" (or praying) against him. Jerry is doing something very disreputable. He is stealing bodies illegally at night, which he provides to the medical profession, which needs the bodies for experimentation and dissections. Cruncher believes he is doing something of value and is quite glad when his son speaks of emulating him. Of course, he does not know his son has followed him to watch his nightly chores.

Book 2, Chapter 15

Book 2, Chapter 15 Summary

There is a great deal of early drinking in the Defarge's wineshop. The story is related by a certain "mender of roads" as to how a tall man was sighted underneath the Marquis Evremonde's carriage. It is the man whose child was killed by the Marquis in his mad dash through Paris. He is ultimately caught and bound, but not immediately executed. It is Monsieur Defarge, himself, who took a petition to the King and Queen. Ultimately, though, the man is sent to a gallows strategically placed near the town well so it poisons the well. Angered by this story, Defarge and his associates swear to register the Chateau and its inhabitants; that is, mark them for death. Meanwhile, Madame Defarge knits. What kind of things. "Shrouds," she tells a stranger. The Defarge's now take the "mender of roads" as a kind of agent for their own designs.

Book 2, Chapter 15 Analysis

After hearing the terrible story of the fate of the man, Gaspard, whose child was killed by the Marquis Evremonde, a pact is made to register- or mark for death- the inhabitants of the Marquis' chateau. To Dickens, the French revolution represented as grave injustices as the former regime and he takes no pains to describe the atrocities of both sides. By taking a stand not only against the regime, but also all associated with the Marquis, lives will be lost in the process. The knitting has become an ironic symbol of the casual attitude towards death and destruction now held by the French Revolutionaries.

Book 2, Chapter 16

Book 2, Chapter 16 Summary

The Defarges are informed that a spy has been commissioned for their neighborhood. His name is John Barsad. He is an Englishman, the very same Barsad who spoke against Charles Darnay at the Old Bailey, an associate of Roger Cly. He is described as forty, somewhat handsome with a sinister expression. Later on, Barsad, as he was so described, visits the shop. He discusses the fate of Gaspard, whose body was hung over the fountain. The spy now tells the Defarges that Dr. Manette's daughter is about to be married to the nephew of the Marquis Evremonde, a certain Charles Darnay. While the Defarges are not sure whether or not to believe this about the family of their old associate, Doctor Manette, they do not dismiss the rumor either.

Book 2, Chapter 16 Analysis

The desperate plot against Charles Darnay is still not over. His enemy, John Barsad, former spy of the Old Bailey, is now in Paris- trying to sow a new deed of destruction. He has now identified to Charles to the ruthless Madame Defarge, who despite having had a constructive and protective relationship to Doctor Manette, has no love for the family of the Marquis Evremonde. It is rather inconclusive how events so far away in England can create any real danger for Charles and his wife.

Book 2, Chapter 17

Book 2, Chapter 17 Summary

It is the night before Lucie's wedding and she and her father sit beneath the plane-tree in their little yard. He tells her how happy he is that she is getting married. He relates to her how, in his suffering in the Bastille, he imagined his daughter as a specter, comforting him, showing him her children, remembering him. She says that she will never let her marriage separate them. After they depart each other's company for the evening, she comes to his bedchamber and kisses him goodnight.

Book 2, Chapter 17 Analysis

In every respect, Lucie shows herself to be the perfect, loving daughter, even in the night before her wedding. She now hears, for the first time, some remnants of her father's suffering in the Bastille and his tender hopes for her.

Book 2, Chapter 18

Book 2, Chapter 18 Summary

Charles Darnay confers with his father-in-law before the marriage. Mr. Lorry confides to Miss Pross how important Lucie has become to him. Doctor Manette comes out of the conference very pale. After the wedding and breakfast, the couple leaves. Lorry returns to the house after being detained at Tellson's. He finds Doctor Manette has returned to his shoemaking ways. They keep the Doctor's relapse from Lucie, who is on her honeymoon.

Book 2, Chapter 18 Analysis

As grim as this tale is, it is still the story of love and devotion among a small group of people. Lorry, Darnay, Miss Pross, the Doctor and Carton's lives surround Lucie. So closely are they knit, that one's misfortune pervades all the others. Such as it is, the Doctor's relapse may cause great concern to every one.

Book 2, Chapter 19

Book 2, Chapter 19 Summary

Mr. Lorry, who has been monitoring Doctor Manette after his relapse, sees that the Doctor seems much better after a nine-day interval. By asking him for a disguised diagnosis of the Doctor's own condition, Lorry is able to extract some of the causes of the Doctor's malady and to be able to decide if there is any action he can take that will serve the Doctor's mental health. In the end, it is decided to destroy the shoemaking bench and implements that the Doctor has taken him with from prison. And so with Miss Pross holding a candle, Lorry destroys the bench, with the rest of the implements buried in the garden.

Book 2, Chapter 19 Analysis

The continual relapse of Doctor Manette is a continuing theme in Dickens' drama of cruelty and revenge, love and high devotion. In this episode, it shows how Lorry, who was first self-described as "mechanical man," a man without feeling has become so devoted to the Doctor that he temporarily relieved himself of his banking duties to completely devote himself to the Doctor's recovery. Lorry's metamorphosis is absolute.

Book 2, Chapter 20

Book 2, Chapter 20 Summary

When Lucy and Charles return home, Charles has an interesting conversation with Carton. Carton begs him to forgive a former, drunken conversation when he had admitted to him his dislike. Charles tells him had completely forgotten him. Then, Sydney uncharacteristically asks him to be his friend. Sydney does not object. However, later, Sydney doesn't speak well of Carton before his wife. He doesn't say anything untrue or unusual. Still, his wife begs him never to speak of Carton in that way again. He agrees.

Book 2, Chapter 20 Analysis

Carton's profession to Charles of friendship is unusual. Carton has an air of indifference for his fellow man. But, given his love for Lucie, Charles' friendship is necessary. He extends his concern to her friends and even his former rival for her affections.

Book 2, Chapter 21

Book 2, Chapter 21 Summary

Life goes on in the Darnay's house, generally loving and tender, but sometimes sorrowful. At one point, one of Lucie's children dies, but it is the death of an angel. Sydney Carton comes over about six times a year. He befriends little Lucie and was known to the boy who died. Lorry comments on the bad business in Paris and how many of his French clients are trying to secure their property at Tellson's. It is during this time, that the Defarges are among the hundreds that storm the Bastille. Monsieur Defarge co-opts a cannon and becomes a connonier in the raging fight to take the dreaded fortress. He becomes the foremost guard of the Governor of the Bastille. Madame Defarge, meanwhile, leads the women. At one point, the Governor killed by the constant pummeling of stabs and blows, she cuts off his head with her own knife. They kill many and retrieve their prisoners. Defarge goes to the Doctor's old cell. He seems to be looking for something. Some are killed and some are freed, but the tide has been turned.

Book 2, Chapter 21 Analysis

Whereas the Darnay house has its share of grief, there is no great harshness in their lives. Still, there is the strange symbol of "echoing footsteps" around the Manette house. This portentous sound somehow becomes a portend for the streets of Darnay's country after the storming of the Bastille. The Defarges, once friends, now possible enemies of the Manette family, are shown to be ruthless, cruel heroes of the Revolution.

Book 2, Chapter 22

Book 2, Chapter 22 Summary

Defarge triumphantly announce that old Foulon, an aristocrat who told the common people to eat grass instead of bread had not died, but had a mock funeral and was captured. The crowd, having found him, is jubilant in its revenge, continually stuffing grass in his mouth, to his back- as they pummel him, drag him, stab him and eventually hang him on a rope that keeps breaking.

Book 2, Chapter 22 Analysis

This chapter is just a further portrait of the blood lust of the Parisians as led by the Defarges. Dickens paints an angry, enthusiastic lust for blood. There is no hope or prayer for mercy in the hands of this crowd.

Book 2, Chapter 23

Book 2, Chapter 23 Summary

The mender of road barely can make enough to eat. The upper class has squeezed the very last drop from him and the common people of France. We return to the Marquis Evremonde's village. After the Marquis' death, his countryside chateau is still guarded by his servant, Gabelle. Gabelle is nervous, looking down at the fountain, which has been the source of such profound grief for the village. As the night grows darker, various figures seem to encroach upon the chateau. But suddenly, the chateau catches on fire. The wind propels the fire further until it is a raging inferno. Although officers are present, no one will help to save it despite the fact that it contains valuables. Despite the horror of the night, the villagers surrounding him disperse and Gabelle manages to live another day.

Book 2, Chapter 23 Analysis

The people of France are not only out for blood, they are out for the extermination of the upper class- their relatives, their property, their history. The burning of the chateau is symbolic of their disregard for aristocratic property- even if it has some intrinsic value.

Book 2, Chapter 24

Book 2, Chapter 24 Summary

Owing to Tellson having two locations, one in England and one in France, Mr. Lorry has decided that he must go to France. He will take Jerry with him. Charles admires his gallantry at going at his age. The House approaches Lorry with a letter addressed to the Marquis St. Evremonde, which is Darnay's French name. Darnay has sworn an oath to Doctor Manette not to reveal this name for others so he only tells Lorry that he knows the person for whom the letter is intended and will give it to him, meaning, of course, himself. The letter is from his Uncle's servant, Gabelle. It is a request to rescue him from a prison in the Abbaye, where he has been condemned to death. He stays up late writing a letter to Lucie and a letter to her Father, explaining why he must go to France. For Charles, France is the "loadstone" or magnet.

Book 2, Chapter 24 Analysis

Now, inscrutable fate draws Charles Darnay closer to his destruction. Filled with false ideas about the sickness that has swept France, he thinks he will be somewhat more regarded as a hero than a traitor. Caught in the crosshairs of his own idealism and his sentimentality about the French people, he is rapidly falling into a desperate trap, caused by his own blindness. His own intrinsic goodness is making him a moth to a hot candle.

Book 3, Chapter 1

Book 3, Chapter 1 Summary

Charles' illusions about his status in the New France are rapidly shattered on his journey to Paris. The mood of the people is suspicious and angry. He is ultimately forced to pay for an escort, which begins to treat him like an emigrant-prisoner. He encounters many who claim that he will undoubtedly be tried and condemned. He is finally put in the custody of Monsieur Defarge through whose agency his put into the Prison of La Force. Defarge has no sympathy for him. The prison is gloomy and filthy. He begins to pace in his cell.

Book 3, Chapter 1 Analysis

The Defarges' story continues to be intertwined with the Darnays and the Manettes. It is clear now that Monsieur Defarge will do nothing special for Charles. He has no sympathy or interest in him. Charles, by now, is beginning to understand the Revolution, which wants nothing less than his life. His deep sympathies for Gabelle should not have overridden his assessment of his situation. He is now less than helpless to help him.

Book 3, Chapter 2

Book 3, Chapter 2 Summary

Tellson's Bank in France had an air of decadence about it with the whitewashed Cupid over the counter and the orange-trees in the courtyard. Hearing the hum of the City, Lorry thanks God that his loved ones are protected and faraway. Shortly after this prayer, he greets with dismay Lucie and her father and finds that, indeed, Charles is in La Force prison. There is a grindstone near-by. Workers come there to sharpen their knives and hatchets, their implements of death. Doctor Manette summons some of these patriots to help him. His reputation is still intact as a former resident of the Bastille.

Book 3, Chapter 2 Analysis

More irony as Lorry finds that not only is he not alone in Paris, but that most of those he cares about are certainly there. It is symbolic that a giant grindstone is placed besides Tellson's Bank where swords are sharpened for the Revolution.

Book 3, Chapter 3

Book 3, Chapter 3 Summary

Lorry is concerned that Tellson's is sheltering Lucie, the wife of an emigrant so he finds her and the others suitable accommodations. One evening, after the Bank closes, Defarge comes to see Lorry, bringing him a note from Doctor Manette. Charles is safe but the Doctor can't come yet. He also has a note for Lucie. The Defarges go to see Lucie. Lorry is suspicious of the Defarge's "suppressed manner," their tone. Madame Defarge confides to her friend, called by Dickens "The Vengeance," how little she is concerned by the family of the aristocrats.

Book 3, Chapter 3 Analysis

Lorry is somewhat deceived initially by the Defarges. Their maneuvers to put Charles in contact with Lorry and Lucie are anglings for a much darker plan. It is their demeanor that gives them away to Lorry. Madame Defarge is a confirmed hater of revolutionaries-and their families. Nothing is safe for the Manettes.

Book 3, Chapter 4

Book 3, Chapter 4 Summary

Doctor Manette stays for several days in the vicinity of La Force, where Charles is staying. He pleads before a Tribunal and, although Charles is not released, begins to feel some of his power as a prisoner of the former system. During this time, La Guillotine has become a theme for jokes, a popular subject of conversation and metaphor, a pendant for necklaces replacing the cross. The King himself is executed as well as the Queen, whose hair has turned a premature gray.

Book 3, Chapter 4 Analysis

During this period, Doctor Manette gains a certain level of confidence. His suffering has become a kind of victory flag and shield to protect him and his own from the Revolutionary predators. He is able to live and walk in the terror.

Book 3, Chapter 5

Book 3, Chapter 5 Summary

Through information obtained through her father, Lucie makes her presence known to Charles every afternoon around 3:00 for several hours. She has to stand besides a wood-sawyer who calls himself the "Samson of the firewood guillotine." He watches her as she stands there. She watches him and the woman called Vengeance and others dance in the street with the deadly Carmagnole, a victory dance of Death by the Revolutionaries. Then, her father tells her Charles is summoned to Tribunal the very next day.

Book 3, Chapter 5 Analysis

Tale of Two Cities moves in rivulets of suspense, for lives are always at stake. An inquisitive woodcutter who likes to pretend his saw is a guillotine, a "harmless" dance of death in the streets, a chance encounter with Madame Defarge, just a "footstep in the snow" all add to the impending sense of potential horror for Charles and his family-rivers of blood and rivulets of suspense.

Book 3, Chapter 6

Book 3, Chapter 6 Summary

Charles' name is called out in the prison and he makes the customary farewells to the others, a ritual he has witnessed many times before. The night before his passage to the Concierge, fifteen prisoners were summoned and fifteen put to death. In the menagerie of the trial, various witnesses are called, the first being Citizen Gabelle, who has been let off because of Charles' appearance. His request for Charles is read in full and then Doctor Manette is called. He does well and his appearance is followed by Mr. Lorry, who speaks of the trial in England. Charles is set free with a shout of applause.

Book 3, Chapter 6 Analysis

When one realizes that this book is all about suspense, one should barely ever breathe a sigh of relief without some kind of reservation. Charles' bout with the revolutionaries will still take another turn. It would seem that the Doctor is the hero of the day and has the support of the people, but that is only how things seem.

Book 3, Chapter 7

Book 3, Chapter 7 Summary

The victory has a very powerful effect on the disposition of Doctor Manette. He has not truly been the savior of his family. Jerry Cruncher and Miss Pross often go out to buy supplies. It seems like the family is safe until the terrible knock on the door. Doctor Manette reassures Lucie that Charles is safe. But it is not true. Charles has been denounced again, by the Defarges and by someone else.

Book 3, Chapter 7 Analysis

The knock on the door is only surprising to someone who has not caught on to Dickens. His goal is to make the reader feel totally insecure until the end of the story. All the love and good feeling of this family and friends is constantly diluted by the nature of the era, which is, indeed, "the worst of times."

Book 3, Chapter 8

Book 3, Chapter 8 Summary

On her way home- and before she knows about the new danger to Charles' life, Miss Pross, accompanied by Jerry, visits a wine shop, where she is poured out a portion of wine. Suddenly, a man rises from his table and moves to leave, crossing her path and setting off a loud scream from the generally proper Miss Pross. It is none other than her brother, Solomon, who she still reveres even though he stole from her and disappeared. They go outside and "Solomon" reveals that he was aware that she was in Paris. Jerry now asks him to reveal his name, saying he knows that he was a spy for the Old Bailey. Suddenly, a name is called out, "Barsad." Jerry affirms his recognition of the name and now sees that it is Sydney Carton who has called out the name. Sydney takes Barsad to Tellson's where he convinces Barsad to co-operate with him in providing access to Charles. One of the cards they hold is the knowledge that Roger Cly never died- information cleaned from Jerry's Resurrection days. Roger had been posing as a French man. Both were in the employ of the anti-Republican English- as spies.

Book 3, Chapter 8 Analysis

The twists of this story, weaving the strands of the tale into a deadly noose for some- have now woven a necktie for John Barsad, the estranged brother of Miss Pross, known to her from childhood as "Solomon." A former spy for Old Bailey and an informer/liar on Charles Darnay, he works for the Republic now under false pretenses. This is used by Sydney as a very special hand of cards- one that perhaps metaphorically contains the legendary Hangman of the tarot. But is the noose to be Barsad's or Sydney himself?

Book 3, Chapter 9

Book 3, Chapter 9 Summary

Lorry extracts from Jerry the substance of his secret profession as gravedigger. Sydney acknowledges his true feelings for Mr. Lorry- of friendship and respect. He asks Lorry not to tell Lucie of his arrangements with Barsad, which are simply of gaining access to Charles. Sydney asks Lorry if, indeed, he does not feel happy that, in his older years, he has secured the love of Lucie and Doctor Manette. Lorry admits that he has. Sydney, though now in France, begins his nighttime wanderings. Sydney stops by La Force prison where he has a brief exchange with the wood-sawyer. He then proceeds to a chemist, where he has certain packets prepared- that must not be accidentally missed together. It is now time for the trial. Besides the Defarges, the third witness against Charles is Doctor Manette- based on words dredged from an old letter found by Defarge in a chimney of the Bastille cell where Manette was kept for so many years.

Book 3, Chapter 9 Analysis

In the elaborate scheme of this novel, it seems that nothing is lost. The secret profession of Jerry Cruncher is revealed when he recognizes that Roger Cly's coffin was empty. Thus, Lorry now knows Jerry's secret. A small scene in a previous chapter had Monsieur Defarge searching the cell of Doctor Manette without any obvious discovery. Now, it seems that a certain letter was found. The discovery could very well lead to the Charles' execution. Dickens isn't even willing to leave the good Doctor with his confidence fully restored, another sacrifice for the intricate plot and suspense of this astounding work.

Book 3, Chapter 10

Book 3, Chapter 10 Summary

Manette's letter describes an encounter on a moonlit night in 1757 when a carriage stops by the Doctor. Identified by name and seated between two armed twin brothers, he is driven to an isolated house. There he hears cries from an upper chamber. His first patient is a lady, who ritualistically calls out, "My husband, my father, and my brother!" Manette now sees another patient, a boy, brother to his first patient, now dying a sword wound. His sister was taken from her husband as a plaything for the brothers. Her husband was chained to a cart like a dog, eventually dying. When her father heard about his sister, his heart burst. The boy then hides his other sister far away and tries to rescue his other sister. In that attempt, he is fatally wounded. At the end, he curses the Evremondes and dies. Later, the boy's sister dies. Manette begins to compose a complaint to the Minister when he is interrupted by the wife of one of the Evremondes. She is with her son, Charles and wants to help the sister of the departed woman. Manette delivers the letter to the Minister. Young Ernest Lafarge, then his servant, informs him of an urgent case. He is taken roadside, where the Evremondes burn his letter and then put him in prison. In his own letter, the Doctor denounces the Evremondes and their descendents, which, of course, includes Charles. Charles is sentenced to execution.

Book 3, Chapter 10 Analysis

Of all the chapters in this sad book, this one most argues against the case for vengeance, a rather blind and dangerous emotion. It is in prison, without any hope for escape, that Manette's poisonous indictment of the descendents of the Evremondes now falls fatalistically on his own daughter and a man beloved to him now, a man who had dared challenge directly the power and class of the Evremondes. Now, Charles, who is this man, is dealt a fatal blow by the tribunal because of Manette's rash words, which were ironically discovered by his one-time assistant, Lafarge, now a servant of the Revolution.

Book 3, Chapter 11

Book 3, Chapter 11 Summary

Lucie is shocked by the sentence, yet she successfully pleads with the tribunal to embrace him for the last time. Darnay tells Manette not to suffer for his letter. He has truly done his best. Lucie faints, and Sydney Carton then carries her to her coach. Little Lucie clings to Carton who secretly whispers to her, "I love you," which she remembers in old age. Carton tells Manette to plea to some judges for Charles' life. He tells Lorry he knows this is futile, but thinks, for posterity, he should make the effort.

Book 3, Chapter 11 Analysis

Dickens spares nobody in this cruel final moment. Now all appears to be lost for Charles. Still, there is the remarkable Sydney Carton who always shows his face at the strangest moments. He will turn out to be the greatest instigator of all.

Book 3, Chapter 12

Book 3, Chapter 12 Summary

Sydney meets the Defarges at their wine shop. Monsieur seems reluctant to have Charles' wife executed or the Doctor himself. Things seem different when Madame Defarge reveals her as the other sister of the wounded boy. The Doctor undergoes another relapse. Sydney meets with Lorry, giving him his certificate, enabling him to leave Paris. Having made clear the danger to Lucie's family, he arranges for a specific time and place for them to leave. He looks up at Lucie's room, blesses her and leaves.

Book 3, Chapter 12 Analysis

Sydney visits the Defarges, perhaps to assess the danger to Lucie, which he discovers to be very much the case. It is revealed that Madame Defarge was the poor patient's sister once attended so long ago- so she has a need for vengeance against the Evremondes.

Book 3, Chapter 13

Book 3, Chapter 13 Summary

Charles waits alone for his doom in the prison. Fifty-two heads will fall on the next day. He writes a letter to Lucie, begging her not to enquire from her father regarding whether he remembered the letter but to realize that her father had tried his utmost to save his life. He writes a letter to Manette to care for his wife and daughter. He gives all of them, then, to Mr. Lorry and gives him his last words about his affairs. After an endless evening, day finally falls and he is suddenly treated to the appearance of Sydney. Sydney has Charles write a letter while he anesthetizes him and has him carted away by Barsad, after dressing in his clothes. He stays behind- for it is Sydney who will be executed. In the carriage, the guards let them pass. Lorry shows them Sydney's pass. Charles is still unconscious.

Book 3, Chapter 13 Analysis

In the most astounding scene of the entire book, Carton's scheme is finally revealed. After all of his self-deprecation and loitering, he is found to be the noblest of all, now facing death for a man he has formally taken as a friend. Now his remarkable plot is shown for all it is. But still, in Dickens' agonizing, uncompromising efforts to give his readers their money's worth, the danger is not yet over- even for Charles and his family.

Book 3, Chapter 14

Book 3, Chapter 14 Summary

Madame Defarge has a secret meeting with accomplices. She is afraid that her husband will neither attack the Doctor nor his daughter. She is mostly concerned with Lucie and her daughter. She will use the testimony of the wood-sawyer to indicate that Lucie visited the prison with some plot in mind. Madame Defarge decides to visit Lucie to get her, in her anger and grieving, to speak against the Republic. Meanwhile, it is decided that Jerry and Miss Pross will leave separately from the Coach with Charles- in order to make the inspections faster. After Doctor, Lucy and Charles leave, Madame Defarge comes to see Lucie. Pross and Defarge have a deadly encounter and, after a vicious fight, Pross kills Defarge with some type of pistol. The sound of the pistol deafens her for life.

Book 3, Chapter 14 Analysis

Ironically, it is Madame Defarge, who generally plays the Grim Reaper herself, who pays the ultimate penalty first. En route to her cruel deed, she meets Lucie's lifelong protector, the dedicated Miss Pross. Madame was ready to renounce Lucie, but she also had her own dagger prepared and was ready to do it herself. Her knitting chores were now over.

Book 3, Chapter 15

Book 3, Chapter 15 Summary

Six carts are headed towards the Guillotine. Barsad tries to quiet a hater of Evremonde- knowing, as he does- that it is Sydney who will die. Sydney has taken a seamstress under his protection, such as it is. He has held her hand on the way to her death. He now asks her to watch him as she goes to her execution. She is troubled that she cannot tell her sister. He comforts her- there is neither time nor trouble in the next world. They kiss and she is gone. He takes his place before the knife of the Guillotine.

Book 3, Chapter 15 Analysis

This phenomenal work ends with a bit of conjecture. If, Dickens says, if Sydney could have written his final words, he would have commented on the presence of his oppressors. He further would have commented on the future of the lives that he has saved and his possible remembrance. He then ascends to his death, his final words echoing into literary history- "It is a far, far better thing I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known."

Characters

John Barsad

See Solomon Pross

Sydney Carton

Sydney Carton is a dissipated English lawyer who spends a great deal of his life drunk. Although he has a brilliant legal mind, his alcoholism keeps him from becoming a success. He first enters *A Tale ofTwo Cities* in 1780, during Charles Darnay's trial for espionage. Darnay is acquitted because of his uncanny resemblance to Carton, thus casting doubts on the testimony of his accusers. Carton works in an unofficial partnership with another lawyer, C. J Stryver. Although Carton's legal mind was mostly responsible for Darnay's acquittal, his coarse manners and habitual drunkenness contrast with his double's refinement and politeness. Carton falls in love with Lucie Manette and, when she marries Darnay, asks to be considered a friend of the family with the privilege of visiting them from time to time His devotion to Lucie is the major factor in his decision to take Darnay's place in prison and be guillotined in 1793.

Understanding the character of Carton is difficult for the reader. We know nothing of his past life or of the reasons that have kept him single into his forties (the age at which he enters the novel). HIs only major weakness is his alcoholism, which in Victorian times was regarded as a character flaw rather than a disease; his redeeming grace is his love for Lucie, which persuades him to sacrifice himself so that she and her family can escape. Ironically, Carton does this by passing himself off as Darnay and taking his place on the scaffold.

Carton is Darnay's alter-ego in several senses of the phrase. He is English, while Darnay is French; coarse-mannered, while Darnay is polite; and alcoholic, while Darnay is temperate. They are united only in their mutual love for Lucie Manette. But it is Carton in the end who succeeds in rescuing the Darnays-Lucie, her husband, and their little daughter-from the fate planned for them by the Revolutionary authorities. On the scaffold Carton has a vision in which he sees that through his execution he creates a memory that Lucie and Darnay will preserve for generations to come. Carton foresees that his namesake, Sydney Darnay, will become a famous judge, fulfilling the career that Carton wanted for himself but could not get At the end of *A Tale of Two Cities.* Carton becomes a Christ-figure, a godlike being who redeems the blood shed in the name of freedom and brotherhood. Through his heroic self-sacrifice, Carton redeems the sins of the St Evremondes in a way that the purer Darnay could not do.

Jerry Cruncher

Jerry Cruncher is the literal symbol of Dickens's theme of resurrection in *A Tale of Two Cities.* Cruncher is a "resurrection man"-he steals fresh corpses from graveyards and delivers them to medical schools so that students can study human anatomy. His values are upside-down; he regards body-snatching as honest work and prayer as weakness. He also works as a porter for Mr. Jarvis Lorry's bank, Tellson's, and helps make Sydney Carton's rescue of the Darnays successful. In the end, Cruncher is impressed by Carton's sacrifice and by the Darnays and resolves to reform.

Charles Darnay

Charles Darnay, or St. Evremonde, is the nephew and heir of the Marquis St. Evremonde, the wicked aristocrat who is responsible for the imprisonment of Dr. Manette. However, Charles has renounced his wicked uncle's fortune, has adopted his mother's maiden name, and has taken a position as a tutor in the French language in England. Darnay is caught up in the events of the French Revolution. In 1781, while trying to help a woman that his family had injured, he is arrested as a spy and placed on trial in England. There he meets Lucie Manette and marries her; they have several children. Darnay is caught in France in 1792 while trying to help a former family servant; he is arrested and sentenced to be executed on the basis of a letter written by Dr. Manette during his years of imprisonment (1757-1775). He is rescued by his English double, Sydney Carton, who takes his place and is executed in his stead.

Like his wife Lucie Manette, Charles Darnay is a largely passive character. Although his manners and behavior are impeccable and his intentions are well-meant, he is incapable of, performing the important tasks to which he commits himself. Both his arrests lake place while he is in the process of trying to extract friends or former servants from difficulties. Darnay is also like Dr. Manette because of the time he spends unjustly confined in prison. It takes Cartou's sacrifice to release Darnay from the cycle of arrests.

Some critics believe that Dickens viewed Darnay as a version of himself. The character shares the author's initials (C.D.) and his relationship with Carton may reflect a split in Dickens's own psy che between hIs heroic, honorable side and his baser nature.

Lucie Darnay

Lucie Manette, Dr. Manette's daughter, at the age of seventeen discovers her father's existence in a French jail. As an infant she was carried off to England by Mr. James Lorry and is raised there in the belief that her father is dead. She travels with Mr. Lorry once again in 1775 to rescue Dr. Manette. Later she marries protagonist Charles Darnay and gives birth to young Lucie, their daughter. Like many other Victorian literary heroines, Lucie tends to give the Impression that she is frail and delicate; she faints easily and is earnestly committed to the salvation of her husband and to the future of

her children. Lucie is primarily a passive character whose purpose is to be the object of devotion of Sydney Carton, Charles Darnay, and Dr. Manette.

Some critics have suggested that Dickens's portrayal of Lucie is based in part on his own feelings for the actress Ellen Ternan and that Lucie is an idealized version of Ellen. Others see her as an expression of his memories of his childhood friend Lucy Stroughill, or a version of the heroine Lucy of Dickens's 1856 play *The Wreck of the Golden Mary.* "Golden-haired" Lucie Manette, according to these interpretations, is an expression of the light (the name Lucie is derived from a word meaning "light") that opposes the darkness and hatred of the Revolutionary figures, especially Therese Defarge. Like the light, Lucie is largely passive; she does not transform herself, but those who are illuminated by her love are transformed themselves. It is Lucie's affection that makes Sydney Carton resolve to sacrifice himself for her family's safety Lucie is a catalyst; she does not change anything herself, but she is the cause of change in others.

Ernest Defarge

Dickens presents the husband of the vengeful Madame Defarge, Ernest Defarge, as another force in the Revolution; a less driven, but still flawed, example of the French common people. Ernest Defarge had served Dr. Manette as a servant before the doctor was imprisoned by the Marquis St. Evremonde and has some affectionate feelings for him when he is released. Defarge later becomes an important Revolutionary leader. However, Defarge exploits Dr. Manette's insanity, opening his prison to curious gapers who want to gawk at the unfortunate madman. Unlike his wife, Ernest Defarge is not interested in pursuing Lucie Darnay and her daughter to their deaths. At the end of the book, Carton foresees Defarge's own death on the guillotine at the hands of his revolutionary companions.

Madame Therese Defarge

Madame Defarge is the symbol of the evils brought forth by the French Revolution. Her entire family was destroyed by the St. Evremonde clan; her sister was raped by the Marquis St. Evremonde-Charles Darnay's uncle-and her brother died at the aristocrat's hands. Because of this tragedy, Defarge has conceived an intense hatred for the St. Evremondes, including Charles Darnay himself, as well as the rest of the aristocratic class. Madame Defarge plots the downfall of the St. Evremondes and other aristocrats with almost infinite patience, working the names of those whom she hates into her knitting. She plots Darnay's arrest in 1792 and the eventual deaths of his entire family, demonstrating the depths of her hatred. Madame Defarge represents the uncontrollable forces of the French Revolution. She is killed in a struggle with Miss Pross, Lucie's nurse, when her pistol goes off accidentally.

Charles St. Evremonde

See Charles Darnay

Marquis St. Evremonde

The Marquis St. Evremonde parallels the animalistic evil of Madame Therese Defarge. He is the image of the uncaring aristocrat of the *ancient regime.* He was responsible for both the imprisonment of Dr. Manette and for the rape of Therese Defarge's sIster and the death of the rest of her family. He is also responsible for the death of Gaspard's young son, whom he runs down in his coach. Dickens stresses the Marquis's lack of humanity and predatory nature by comparing him to a tiger.

Jarvis Lorry

Jarvis Lorry is the representative of Tellson's Bank, an old, established English institution. He serves partly as a means of progressing the plot and partly as a symbol of English middle-class virtue. It was Mr Lorry who rescued the infant Lucie Manette and took her to safety in England when her father was arrested and her mother died. It is Mr. Lorry who goes to retrieve Dr Manette after his eighteen years in prison. Finally, It is Mr. Lorry who aids Carton in his deception of the French authorities in order to rescue the Darnays from Revolutionary France. Mr. Lorry serves as well as a way of introducing one of the novel's major themes: the idea of imprisonment and redemption. He dreams of literally "resurrecting" Dr. Manette, who has been buried alive for nearly twenty years; yet Mr. Jarvis confines himself in the jail-like recesses of Tellson's.

Dr. Alexandre Manette

Dr. Manette is one of the central characters in *A Tale of Two Cities.* He was imprisoned at the start of the story because he had tried to bring the crimes of two of the St. Evremondes, members of a noble family, to public trial. The St. Evremondes have conspired to keep Manette in prison for eighteen years and this confinement is one of the major plot points of the novel. The doctor's incarceration has cost him his sanity. He can only remember his cell number. When he is first rescued from his prison he believes he is a cobbler, and when he comes under stress his insanity reasserts itself. He first begins to revive when the sight of his daughter Lucie recalls memories of his dead wife. He collapses into insanity again when he discovers his son-in-law is a member of the hated Evremonde clan, and still again when Darnay is imprisoned in Paris and threatened with beheading.

Dr. Manette's major function is to set the plot of *A Tale of Two Cities* in motion, but some critics consider his sane and insane personalities to represent the Victorian literary fascination with duality. His dual personas also illustrate the social split taking place in France during the "Terror," and the differences between Paris and London, the two cities of the title. Some critics also suggest that Manette's character reflects the author's own personality. They trace parallels between Manette's career as a physician and his selflessness in reporting the abuses of the nobility with Dickens's career as a journalist and advocate for social improvement. They also see similarities between Manette's

creation, in his madness, of a world in which he is only a cobbler and Dickens's creation of secondary worlds in his novels.

Lucie Manette

See Lucie Darnay

Miss Pross

Miss Pross is Lucie Manette Darnay's nurse, then her companion and nurse to her daughter Little Lucie during the traurnatic months spent in Revolutionary Pans. She is also the sister of the English spy Solomon Pross (John Barsad). In some ways Miss Pross is a stereotypical Englishwoman; she is blunt-spoken, nationalistic, and shorttempered, but she is also good-hearted and devoted to Lucie She opposes the darkness of the revolutionary Madame Therese Defarge. In a climactic struggle, Miss Pross kills Madame Defarge while trying to keep her from discovering that the Darnays have fled from Paris.

Solomon Pross

Solomon Pross is the brother of Miss Pross, Lucie Manettte's nurse. He works as a spy under the name John Barsad, first for the English and then for the French government. Carton foresees in his final vision that Barsad will be caught and executed during the "Terror."

C. J. Stryver

C. J. Stryver is the quasi-law partner of Sydney Carton. He makes his living by exploiting Carton's legal mind. Unlike Carton, Stryver is motivated and active, but he is also unprincipled and in the end unredeemed. He courts Lucie Manette briefly and, after she chooses Darnay, pretends that he had rejected her.

The Vengeance

The Vengeance is Madame Therese Defarge's chosen companion. As her title suggests, her entire identity is swallowed by her desire for revenge on the aristocratic class.

Themes

Order and Disorder

The story of *A Tale of Two Cities* takes place during the turbulent years of the French Revolution. Dickens stresses the chaos of Revolutionary France by using images of the ocean. He calls the Paris mob a "living sea," and compares Ernest Defarge to a man caught in a whirlpool. Defarge and his wife are both at the center of revolutionary activity in Paris, just as their lives are at the center of the whirlpool. Order breaks down once again in the second chapter of the third book, "The Grindstone." "Dickens deliberately set Darnay's return to Paris and arrest at the time of the September Massacres," writes Ruth Glancy in *A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens's Revolutionary Novel,* "a four-day execution of 1,089 prisoners from four Paris prisons, condemned in minutes each by .. 'sudden Courts of Wild Justice.'" Contrasted to the chaos of Paris is the order of England: Dr. Manette's peaceful home in Soho is a place of refuge for Darnay, Carton, and Mr. Lorry, while even Tellson's Bank serves as a center of calmness in the whirlpool of Revolutionary Paris.

Death and Resurrection

Death, burial, and resurrection are themes that Dickens returns to again and again in A *Tale of Two Cities.* The first book of the novel, "Recalled to Life," traces the resurrection of Dr. Manette, who has been held in prison for almost twenty years. Prisons, for Dickens, are symbolic of the grave comparison that he makes throughout his works, and which may be related to his father's imprisonment in the debtors' prison at Marshal sea. Mr. Lorry, who travels to Paris ill 1775 to secure the doctor's release, views himself as literally digging up Dr. Manette's body. He fancies that the doctor has been buried for so long that he will fall to pieces upon being liberated: "Got out at last, with earth hanging around his face and hair, he would suddenly fall away to dust." Even the doctor's daughter Lucie, whom he has never seen, believes that the person who will emerge from the prison will be a ghost rather than a living man. Like a man brought back to life, Manette cannot quite shake the hold his burial and rebirth has on his mind. He reverts to his cobbling--a sign of his madness contracted in prison-during periods of stress, but he is finally redeemed by his daughter's love and his own forgiveness of Darnay for the crimes of the St. Evremondes.

Other characters are also absorbed in Dickens's death imagery. Jerry Cruncher, the Tellson's Bank messenger, is also a "resurrection man"-a person who steals fresh corpses from graveyards and sells them to medical schools for use as anatomy specimens. Charles Darnay is imprisoned and released twice ill the course of the novel; the second tune, it takes another death, Sydney Carton's, to secure Darnay's freedom. Madame Defarge, consumed by a desire for vengeance, finds her death in a tussle with Miss Pross. In addition, in his final moments Carton foresees the deaths of a large number of minor characters, including the spies Barsad and cry, the revolutionary

leaders Defarge and the woman known as The Vengeance, and the judge and jury who condemned Darnay to death. Revolutionary anarchy and hatred consume these people, but the Darnays, Dr. Manette, Mr. Lorry, and especially Carton, are redeemed through their love and self-sacrifice.

Memory and Reminiscence

A Tale of Two Cities is a historical novel, about events approximately seventy years past when Dickens wrote the work. For the author in *A Tale of Two Cities,* memory is often a trap, pulling people into an abyss of despair. Madame Defarge's hatred of aristocrats in general and St. Evremonde in particular is based on her memory of the rape and deaths of her siblings at his hands. However, it can also be a force for redemption. It is Dr. Manette's memory of his dead wife, seen in his daughter's face, that begins his process of resurrection from the grave of his prison and madness. "Darnay ... listens to the voices from his past,"_ states Ruth Glancy in *A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens's Revolutionary Novel;* "his desire to right the wrongs of his family is primarily due to his mother's reliance on him to do so." Perhaps most interesting, however, is Sydney Carton and his relationship to memory. His colleague C. J. Stryver calls him "Memory Carton" for his brilliant legal mind. Dickens's portrayal of Carton, however, shows him inspired by the memory of his love for Lucie to renounce his passive life. "When Carton dies with the words 'It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done,' he is renouncing the mental prison that has prevented him from making something of his life,'" writes Glancy; "he is living dynamically, as Doctor Manette does, and even if for him the action will soon be over, its repercussions will be felt for as long as the Darnay family survives."

Style

Setting

The chief characteristic of *A Tale of Two Cities* that sets it apart from Dickens's other novels is its historical setting. Most of the author's works comment on contemporary English society; *A Tale of Two Cities* does this, too, but not as directly as, say, *David Copperfield* or *Great Expectations.* Dickens contrasts late eighteenth-century Paris and London both to advance the plot and to draw conclusions about the nature of freedom and the redeeming power of love. The novel begins in England, and most of the fIrst book takes place in that country. In the second book, chapters alternate between the English and the French settings, and the third is set almost entirely in France. "At the beginning of the novel,"' writes Ruth Glancy in *A Tale of Two Cities.*

Dickens's Revolutionary Novel, "Dickens paints a grim picture of both countries. They both had kings who believed in their divine right to rule. English spirituality had deteriorated into communing With spirits and other superstitious practices France, he says, was less given over to such spiritual revelations, but had instead a clergy that inflicted cruel punishments for minor offenses." In England mi nor legal offenses were often punished with hanging. At the end of the novel, Dickens contrasts the two countries in the persons of Frenchwoman Madame Defarge and Englishwoman Miss Pross; in the struggle, however, he portrays not the triumph of one country over another, but the triumph of love over hatred.

Antithesis

One of the most notable devices that Dickens uses in *A Tale of Two Cities* is the contrast of thesis and antithesis. The opening words of the novel introduce this conflict. Most of the major themes of the novel are summed up in these lines' "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." Characters mirror and oppose each other. For example, Madame Defarge's experiences mirror those of Dr. Manette Defarge's sister is raped and her brother is murdered by the Marquis St. Evremonde; Manette wituesses the crime and is imprisoned by the aristocratic criminal. Ernest Defarge and Mr. Lorry mirror each other; they both regard themselves as businessmen and they both care for Dr. Manette. However, while Defarge becomes consumed by hate and will eventually die under the guillotine, Mr. Lorry is redeemed by his love for the Darnays and escapes France in their company. These conflicts, which Dickens pursues throughout the novel, are resolved by Sydney Carton's sacrifice for love of Lucie. He concludes with a positive statement of goodness: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done, it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known."

Doppelganger

The device of the *doppelganger,* or identical double, is central to *A Tale of Two Cities.* Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton are physically nearly identical, and some critics suggest that they are psychologically two sides of the same psyche. When Darnay is accused of spying and placed on trial in England, his lawyer, C. J. Stryver, secures his release. Stryver discredits the prosecution witness, who upon seeing Carton can no longer swear that Darnay was the man he saw spying. The climax of the novel, in which Carton takes Darnay's place on the execution grounds, is dependent on their close physical resemblance. The fact that both Carton and Darnay are in love with the same woman-Lucie Manett-echoes the physical resemblance between the two. In other ways, however, the two are opposed. Darnay, for instance, is consumed with the need to undo the evils that his uncle, the Marquis St. Evremonde, has inflicted on people. He makes his nearly-fatal trip to Paris in order to try to rescue Gabelle, a former family servant, but he is unsuccessful; he is caught, imprisoned, and sentenced to be executed. On the other hand Carton, who reveals to Lucie that he has previously lived a life of idleness, is successful in his bid to release Darnay from prison. Ironically Darnay, who has lived an upright, moral life, is successful only as a passive figure in his marriage. Carton, who has lived an immoral life of drunkenness and idleness, is successful in his activity, although the price of his success is his life.

Historical Context

Although A *Tale of Two Cities* takes place in a time some seventy years before Dickens was writing the novel, it does indirectly address contemporary issues with which the author was concerned. During the 1780s-the period in which the novel was set-England was a relatively peaceful and prosperous nation. Its national identity was caught up in a long war with France, which the French Revolution first interrupted, then continued. The ideals of the French Revolution were imported to England by political and literary radicals such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Many people, especially the English aristocracy and middle classes, feared these revolutionary values, seeing in them a threat to their prosperous and stable way of life. However, although there were social inequities in England as well as in France, England also had a long tradition of peaceful social change. In addition, the country's political leaders were very successful at uniting all classes of society in the struggle against Revolutionary France and its successor, the Empire under Napoleon Bonaparte.

Despite these successes, fears of revolutionary rhetoric and struggle persisted in England down to Dickens's own day. Other changes also embraced the country; the Industrial Revolution created a new wealthy class and brought a previously unknown prosperity to England. That same industrialization, however, also created an underclass of laborers who relied on regular wages to survive. "Overcrowding, disease, hunger, long hours of work, and mindless, repetitive labor,"_ explains Ruth Glancy in *A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens's Revolutionary Novel,* "characterized the new life for this new class of urban poor." This underclass was largely scorned or ignored by society. It had no rights, it could not vote in elections, and it could not legally form unions for its own protection. In addition, Glancy states, "many members of the upper classes feared even educating the poor, in case they would then become politically aware and eager to better themselves when it suited many people to have them as cheap labor." The English tradition of peaceful protest, expressed by public marches and meetings, continued throughout the early nineteenth century, but it was interrupted as the century progressed by riots and the destruction of property. "People feared that a revolution as horrifying as the French one could after all happen in England,"' Glancy declares. "A few political thinkers believed that such a revolution was actually the answer to Britain's problems, but most people, like Dickens, feared the actions of the mob, having seen the bloody outcome of the 1789 revolution."

The revolution that Dickens and many others feared in 1850s England did not arrive, in part be cause of the efforts of various reform parties Although groups such as the Chartist movement had struggled for better conditions for English workers as early as the 1830s, by the 1850s many of the reforms they had sought were still not in place. The 1832 Reform Bill, introduced by Lord John Russell, had smoothed out some of the inequitles in the parliamentary system, but it still left thousands of working poor disenfranchised and discontented. It was not until 1867 that Benjamin Disraeli introduced a Reform Bill that nearly doubled the number of voters throughout England, Wales, and Scotland. This reform, passed late in Dickens's life, helped smother the fears of bloody revolution that dogged the English upper and middle classes. "There

was no bloody revolution," explains Glancy, "but Dickens and others deplored the snail's pace that the government took to achieve peaceful reform through the parliamentary process. If the time of the Revolution in France was 'the epoch of belief... the epoch of incredulity,'" she concludes, "so too were the 1850s in Britain "

Critical Overview

A Tale of Two Cities is perhaps the least characteristic of Charles Dickens's works. Unlike both his earlier and his later novels, which are largely concerned WIth events within the Victorian society in which he lived, *A Tale of Two Cities is* set during a period some seventy years earlier. It shows both France and England in an unflattering light. Perhaps because the novel is so uncharacteristic of the author, it remains among the author's most popular works with readers who do not generally enjoy Dickens. On the other hand, It is often rated the least popular Dickens novel among Dickens fans.

While *A Tale of Two Cities* was immensely popular with the reading public on its original serialization in 1859, Its Critical reception was mixed. "One feature that appears from the outset," explains Norman Page In his essay "Dickens and His Critics,"_ "is a polarization of responses, the novel being found either superlatively good or superlatively bad." According to Ruth Glancy in *A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens's Revolutionary Novel,* most contemporary critics routinely dismissed the type of popular literature that Dickens wrote as being unworthy of ranking as art The most famous and the most caustic of the early critics of *A Tale of Two Cities* was Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, who wrote a very harsh review of the book in the December 17, 1859, issue of *Saturday Review.* "After condemning the plot-'it would perhaps be hard to Imagine a clumsier or more disjointed framework for the display of the tawdry wares which form Mr. Dickens's stock in trade'-Stephen dismissed *A Tale of Two Cities* as a purely mechanical effort, producing grotesqueness and pathos through formula writing and trickery," explains Glancy. "He objected particularly to the 'grotesqueness' of the speech of the French characters, whose French sounding English he considered 'misbegotten jargon' that 'shows a great want of sensIbility to the real requirements of art' " "It has been suggested," continues Page, "that... Stephen was motivated more by political than by literary considerations, and It is true that one line of his attack is directed at Dickens's disparagement of eighteenth-century England in relation to the present, and his hostIle portrayal of the French aristocracy of the same period."

Stephen's attack, politically motivated or not, sums up most of the criticisms that later scholars have levelled at the novel: (1) as history, it is flawed; (2) it is mechanical and unrealistic in its construction; and (3) it is very uncharacteristic of Dickens. Many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics, including the Important Dickens scholar George Gissiing and Dickens's fellow-journalist and novelist G. K. Chesterton, followed Stephen's lead in criticizing the novel. According to Page's essay, Chesterton objects to Dickens's portrayal of the Revolution as an elemental act of emotion rather than recognizing the importance of intellectual ideas. Page also reveals that in Gissing's review of the novel, construction has "ceased to be a virtue and has become a constraining and excluding factor."_ After Dickens's death in 1871, writes Page, "the novelist Margaret Oliphant dismissed It as unworthy of Dickens and suggested that It 'might have been Written by any new author, so little of Dickens there is in it '" Other critics considered its characters and ItS staging unrealistic and objected to its lack of humor.

Stephen's opinion, although influential, was not universally accepted. Favorable reviews of *A Tale of Two Cities* appeared in London newspapers, including the *Daily News,* the *Daily Telegraph,* the *Morning Post* and the *Morning Star,* throughout the month of December, 1859. Many of Dickens's own literary friends, acquaintances, and contemporaries, including John Forster, Thomas Carlyle, Willie Collins, and Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) also praised the novel. Modern critics also largely praise the novel, concentrating on its psychological portraits and its status as Instorical fiction. Glancy reports that the work "has achieved new status and new serious study," and concludes that "Its continuing presence on school reading lists and in films and plays. .. attests to its lasting popularity ... WIth the many readers who find in *A Tale of Two Cities* the full range of Dickens's dramatic and narrative power.'"

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Griffith is *a professor of English and philosophy at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska. In the following excerpt, he discusses Dickens's obsession with duality in the book and the parallels implied between the era of the French Revolution and the author's own time.*

In a preface to *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens described how the idea for the novel came to him when he was playing a role in 1857 in a theatrical production of *The Frozen Deep,* a play Written by his friend Wilkie Collins. In the playa man involved in a love triangle sacrifices his life to save the rival suitor of the woman he loves. Dickens's account of the origins of the novel points to Sydney Carton as the central character of *A Tale of Two Cities,* although other evidence suggests that other ideas might have played as large a role in the birth of the book. In notebooks as early as 1855 there appear references to the fate of people released after long imprisonment and to the phrase "Buried Alive," which was for a time Dickens's working title for *A Tale of Two Cities.* "Recalled to Life" became his title for Part I of the novel. This evidence places Dr. Manette's imprisonment center stage. An argument for either character as focal misses Dickens's craft in bringing those two characters and others-together in the theme of resurrection and renewal, life, death and rebirth in this story of the French Revolution.

The secrecy shadowing the opening chapter, best expressed in the cryptic message "Recalled to Life,'" attends the effort to retrieve Dr. Manette from the French prison where he has been "buried" for eighteen years. Three times Dickens repeats the following exchange:

"Buried how long?"
"Almost eighteen years." "I hope you care to live." "I can't say."

Dr. Manette, a man figuratively returned from the grave and given life again, is the first of many characters in the novel whose life story is the story of death and rebirth. Charles Darnay, on trial for his life at the book's opening, is acquitted; then in France, not once but twice, he is retried, each time to be rescued from a near certain death by guillotine. He is rescued first by Carton, then by Dr. Manette, then again by Carton, who speaks the words of the Anglican funeral service, "I am the Resurrection and the LIfe." Carton himself is figuratively brought to lIfe by his heroic role in the novel. In his first appearance, at Darnay' s trial, Carton is the Jackal to Stryver's Lion, a man whose promise has ended in a dissolute alcoholIsm and idleness. When he describes himself to Lucie as a "self-flung away, wasted, drunken, poor creature of misuse,'" she asks: "Can I not recall you... to a better course?" Indeed she does. In his selfsacrificing devotIon to Lucie he finds redemption, giving his life that Darnay might live, the savior saved.

Dickens extends the "Recalled to Life" theme to the secondary characters, sometimes in comic ways. Jerry Cruncher, for example, is a "Resurrection Man," the term given to those who robbed the graves of the freshly buried to keep the anatomy schools supplied

with corpses. Cruncher's efforts to retrieve the body of Roger Cly following his burial are stymied when he discovers an empty casket. Cly's death and burial as an Old Bailey spy, complete with an euraged London mob, is a fraud, a means of his escaping England with John Barsad. Cly, *too,* then, is "buried" and resurrected. The aristocrat Foulon tries the same trick in Paris, but the enraged French mob will not be fooled. "Resurrected" from a staged death, he is then killed, his mouth stuffed with grass in fitting vengeance for his once having told the hungry peasantry to eat grass.

The larger canvas on which Dickens works is the story of the two cities of the title, the historical account of the French Revolution about which Dickens also thinks in terms of death and renewal, for the Revolution is the death of the *ancien regime* and the birth of the Republic, the bloody and fiery renewal of France. In the same preface in which he spoke of the genesis of the novel in his participation in Collins's play, Dickens also expressed his gratitude to Victorian historian Thomas Carlyle, whose *The French Revolution* (1837) Dickens once claimed in a letter to have read "for the 500th time." From Carlyle, Dickens *took* both numerous specific details about the Revolution and a more general view of history. Carlyle viewed history as a grand succession of eras, often in cycles of destruction and reconstitution. In history there was always a revelation of a dIvine moral order at work in the world. The French Revolution, the single most significant recent event in the lives of those like Carlyle and Dickens who were born in the Napoleonic aftermath, offered abundant lessons regarding the presence of the past. Horrified by the Terror of 1793, the English read the lesson that corruption breeds corruption, that extremes are followed by extremes. The earlier generation of English writers, typified by the Romantic poet William Wordsworth, were suited by the ambitious idealism of the Revolution. To Dickens, by contrast, although he evoked sentimental ideals in Carton's sacrifice to save the life of a rival lover, there was nothing romantic or idealizing about what death was necessary to recall to life a nation.

The avenging revolutionaries are as dreadful as those whom they overthrow. Dickens allots a single chapter to recounting the rape of the young peasant girl, Madame Defarge's sister, at Darnay's second trial when Defarge reads from the account of the affair which Dr. Manette had written in 1857. Only three chapters sketch the proud indifference to the suffering of the peasantry of Monseigneur St. Evremonde, Darnay's uncle, leading to his murder. The remaining French chapters unroll in all their gruesome predictability the equally barbarous French mobs of the Revolution. In other words, Dickens is more horrified by the sins of the Revolutionaries than by the sins of the aristocrats which give birth to revolution. Except for the Defarges, who are given names and more singular identities, the Revolutionaries are seen collectively, all of them named "Jacques." St. Antoine, a place name for a Paris suburb, is personified, given a collective identity. In the Carmagnole, the frenzied dance in the Paris streets which follows Darnay's acquittal in his *fust* French trial, all identities merge into one destructive force. Finally, characters have identities not as persons but as awful functions in the Revolution, as in the case of Vengeance, who accompanies the Defarges.

With death and life so closely linked in the renewal theme, Dickens found a strategy for his presentation. He presents, beginning with the title, complementary and contradictory pairs of places, characters, events, and ideas. London and Paris, the former apparently

a safe haven, the latter a hell, are more similar than they seem. Darnay is tried in both cities. The mob at Cly's "burial" is as frenzied as the ones ill Paris. At the Manettes' apartment in Soho, a thunderstorm disrupts an outdoor Sunday dinner, driving the Manettes inside for safety while people hurry in the streets, their footsteps "the footsteps destined to come to all of us."

Characters are doubles of each other. Carton resembles Darnay, in the beginning physically but not morally, in the end reversed. Darnay himself, having renounced his birthright, is a ghost of the Evremondes. Darnay's father and uncle are twins, indistinguishable in their awful pride. Dr. Manette has two selves, the Imprisoned man who flees the horror of his imprisonment by reducing his life to work on a shoe bench, and the rescued man who several times regresses to his former self.

Even Dickens's style reflects his obsession with duality. The famous opening passage almost traps Dickens, like a repeated melody which he cannot stop:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, It was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, It was the epoch of 10credulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, It was the spring of hope, It was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way-in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

The key note struck is contradiction, but the passage also points to the similarity between the age of the French Revolution and Dickens's own. His story insists that all ages are one in the call of duty and the threat to civility and virtue. His most virtuous characters in the book-Lucie, Darnay, Carton, Manette, Lorry-are self-sacrificing, but, unlike the Revolutionaries, who insist on selfsacrifice for the sake of Revolution, Dickens's virtuous ones give of themselves for another individual. For Dickens the grand sweep of historical events is still dwarfed by the power of personal relationships in which life, death, and renewal are less ambiguous, as the Revolution disappears before Carton's final words: "It is a far, far better thing I do than any I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest I go to than any I have ever known." Dickens's apparent solution to the problem of a world so troubled that it spawns vengeful revolution is a call to a moral renewal in our personal relationships which would make such revolutions unnecessary.

Source: George V Griffith, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 1999

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Manheim uses Lucy and Dr. Manette as examples of roles female and male characters play in A Tale of Two Cities.

Lucie is basically only one more in the line of Dickensian virgin-heroines whom the critic Edwin Pugh [in *The Charles Dickens Originals,* 1925] felicitously called "feminanities." Yet, as Professor Edgar Johnson clearly saw [in his book *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph,* Vol. II, 1952], there was a subtle distinction.

Lucie is given hardly any individual traits at all, although her appearance, as Dickens describes It, is like that of Ellen, "a short, slight, pretty figure, a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes,"_ and it may be that her one unique physical characteristic was drawn from Ellen too: "a forehead with a singular capacity (remembering how young and smooth It was), of lifting and knitting itself into an expression that was not quite one of perplexity, or wonder, or alarm, though It included all the four expressions.". . The fact that Lucie and Dr. Manette at the time of his release from the Bastille are of almost the same age as Ellen and Dickens does not mean that the Doctor's feeling for his daughter is the emotion Dickens felt for the pretty, blue-eyed actress, although the two merge perhaps in his fervent declaration [in his letter protesting the scandal, a letter which he "never meant to be published"] that he knows Ellen to be as "innocent and pure, and as good as my own dear daughter"

But Lucie fails to fit into the pattern of the unattainable dream-virgin of the earlier novels in at least one other respect. Most of Dickens' earlier heroine-ideals do not marry until the last-chapter summation of the "lived-happily-ever-after" pattern. Lucie is married, happily married, through much of the book. She maintains a household for her husband and her father, and she finds room for compassion, if not love, for the erring Carton. What is more, she has children, two of them. Yet she seems never to grow older. She was seventeen in 1775; she is, to all intents and purposes, seventeen in 1792. In the interim she has allegedly given birth to two Dickens-ideal infants, two of the most sickening little poppets we could possibly expect from one who, despite his experience as the father of ten children, still sought desperately to re-create infancy and childhood in an image which would affirm his own concept of unworldly innocence. Let the reader take a firm grip on himself and read the dying words of the little son of Charles and Lucie Darnay, who died in early childhood for no other reason, it must seem, than to give the author another opportunity to wallow in bathos.

"Dear papa and mamma, I am very sorry to leave you both, and to leave my pretty sister; but I am called, and I must go I"
"Poor Carton' Kiss turn for me!"

Poor Carton, indeed! Poor Dickens! Little Lucie is not much better, for in Paris, after her father's condemnation, when her mother is mercifully unconscious and unaware of Carton's presence, she cries out in sweet childish innocence to friend Sydney:

"Oh, Carton, Carton, dear Carton' . . Now that you have come, I think you will do something to help mamma, something to save papa' Oh, look at her, dear Carton! Can you, of all the people who love her bear to see her so?"
Out of the mouths of babes! At this point there is obviously nothing for Sydney to do but head straight for the nearest guillotine.

But Sydney is not to be left wholly without his own dream girl. Just as the purified Darnay is permitted to live out his life with the "attained" (and untainted) Lucie, so the dying Carton is accompanied to his execution by the virgin-victim, the innocent seamstress whom he solaces and strengthens until the final moments of their love-death, although her first glance had revealed that he was not the man Darnay whom she had previously admired.

Since the pattern of attainability is characteristic of the primary "virgin" in this novel, the figure of the decayed virgin, the older freak and enemy, is markedly absent from it. A few novels back, Dickens had had such characters in the immortal Sairey Gamp *(Martin Chuzzlewlt)* and Mrs. Pipchin *(Dombey and Son);* he was to have the most horrifying of them all in his very next novel *(Great Expectations)* in the person of Miss Havisham. Here Miss Pross, although she has many of the elements of the "freak" in the best Dickensian tradition, is all benevolence, with her red-headed queerness overshadowed by her devoted love and affectionate care of the virgin-queen to whom she is a substitute mother, With no flaw except her unconquerable belief in the virtue and nobility of her erring brother Solomon. Just as she, the benevolent mother-protectress, is herself merely an aged virgin, so her counterpart and rival is the childless wife (also a devoted, albeit vindictive, sister), Therese Defarge. The word *rival* is used advisedly, for while there is no sign of overt rivalry between the two during nine-tenths of the novel, Dickens goes out of his way to bring them face to face at the end. He strains all of his plot structure to bring Mme. Defarge to the Manette dwelling on the day of the execution to have Miss Pross left there alone to face her. Then a melodramatic physical encounter ensues between the two women, neither of whom can, in any sense of the words, speak the other's language. Lucie's bad angel falls dead (accidentally, of course, by her own hand), but the good angel is not unscathed, and If, in her later life, her "queerness" is augmented by the ear-trumpet which she will no doubt use, yet all will know that she came by this crowning, though no doubt humorous, affliction in a good cause.

Although the category of mother-figure is limited, there is no lack of father-counterparts, for the law-as-father has become blended with the fear of condemnation by society, which thereby also becomes a symbolic father-figure. Society and its moral sanctions constitute the only fly in the Ointment of adolescent happiness in a sinful love. We have noted that, as a propitiatory gesture, Charles's wicked father-enemy is not his father (as he well might have been) but his thoroughly aristocratic twin-uncle, who, being French, is more vil1ainous than any British father-enemy might have been. Mr. Stryver, in his vampirish relationship with Carton,

is another figure of the worthless "father" who sucks the blood of his talented "son." And since Dickens almost always maintains a balance between evil and virtuous figures in all categories, we have, on the benevolent side, Mr. Lorry, another unmarried "father,"

the only living figure in the gallery of scarecrows who inhabit Tellson's Bank. Midway between the two classes is the hagridden Ernest Defarge, whose every attempt at benevolence is thwarted by his vengeful wife and her abettors, the allegorically named *Vengeance* and the members of the society of Jacques. This last-named group produces one brilliantly sketched psychopath, the sadistic, finger-chewing Jacques Three.

The one remaining father-figure is the most interesting, complex, and well-developed character in the whole novel, Dr. Manette. Since he could not have been much more than twenty-five years old when he was tom from his newly-wedded English wife to be imprisoned in the Bastille for nearly eighteen years, he must have been less than fortyfive when we first met him in Defarge' s garret. And Dickens, let It be remembered, was forty-five when he wrote of him. Here is his portrait:

A broad ray of light fell into the garret, and showed the workman, with an unfinished shoe upon his lap, pausing in his labour. His few common tools and various scraps of leather were at his feet and on his bench. He had a white beard, raggedly cut, but not very long, a hollow face, and exceedingly bright eyes. The hollowness and thinness of his face would have caused them to look large, under his yet dark eyebrows and his confused white hair, though they had been really otherwise, but they were naturally large, and looked unnaturally so His yellow rags of shirt lay open at the throat, and showed his body to be withered and worn.

Of course the appearance of great age in a middle-age man is rationally explained by the suffering entailed by his long, unjust imprisonment. Yet, nearly eighteen years later (the repetition of the number is meaningful), when he has become the unwitting agent of his son-in-law's destruction and has been unable to use his special influence to procure Charles' release, he is pictured as a decayed mass of senility.

"Who goes here? Whom have we Within? Papers!"

The papers are handed out and read. "Alexandre Manette Physician. French. Which is he?"

"This is he," this helpless, inarticulately murmuring, wandering old man pointed out.

"Apparently the Citizen-Doctor is not in his right mind? The Revolution-fever will have been too much for him?"

Greatly too much for him. Carton envisions his complete recovery, but we have some difficulty in believing it.

In the interim, however, he is pictured as a stalwart, middle-aged medical practitioner. His sufferings have caused a period of amnesia, with occasional flashes of painful recollection, as in the scene in which he hears of the discovery of a stone marked DIG in a cell in the Tower of London. We never know, by the way, whether his recollection at this moment is complete and whether he has, even furtively, any recall of the existence of the document of denunciation found by M. Defarge. The aspects of conscious and

repressed memory are here handled with great skill by Dickens. Generally, his amnesia is reciprocal; he cannot recall his nonnal life during the period of relapse, or vice versa, especially when his relapses are triggered by events and disclosures which bring up memories of his old wrongs. His reversion to shoemaking for a short time after Charles proposes marriage to Lucie and again for a longer time following Lucie's marriage and Charles's final revelation of his long-suspected identity foreshadow the great disclosure which is to make him the unwitting aggressor against the happiness of his loving and beloved daughter.

When we consider Dr. Manette's conduct, however, we find that, whether Dickens consciously intended it to be or not, the doctor of Beauvais is a good psychiatrist, at least in the handling of his own illness. His shoemaking is superficially pictured as a symptom of mental regression and decay, but in its inception it must have been a sign of rebellion against madness rather than a symptom thereof. He relates that he begged for permission to make shoes as a means of diverting his mind from its unendurable suffering. Shoemaking, truly an example of vocational therapy, was the only contact with reality that his distracted mind, otherwise cut off from reality, possessed. It was, therefore, a means of bringing about his recovery. Lucie fears the shoemaking, but she realizes that her loving presence, coupled with the availability, if needed, of the vocational contact with reality, will serve to draw him back to normal adjustment. It would seem, then, that the act of Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross, carried on furtively and guiltily, of destroying his shoemaker's bench and tools after his spontaneous recovery from the attack following Lucie's wedding, was a great error, an error against which the doctor, giving an opinion in the anonymous presentation of his own case by Mr. Lorry, strongly advises. For when he once again falls into a state of amnesia and confusion, after the realization of the damage he has done to Charles and his impotence to remedy that damage, he calls for his bench and tools, but they are no longer to be had, and he huddles in a comer of the coach leaving Paris, a pitiful picture of mental decay from which we can see no hope of recovery despite the optimistic vision of Carton's last moments.

The basic aim of this paper has been, of course, psychological interpretation; but the psychological critic has sometimes been accused of neglecting the critical function of evaluation, and possibly a few concluding words might be added on that score.

In a lecture on criticism given at Harvard in 1947, E. M. Forster [as recorded by V. S. Pritchett in an article on E. M. Forster, published in the *New York Times Book Review,* December 29, 1968] distinguished beautifully between the function and method of creation and the function and method of criticism.

What about the creative state? In it a man is taken out of himself He lets down, as it were, a bucket into the unconscious and draws up something which is normally beyond his reach. He mixes this thing WIth his normal experience and out of the mixture he makes a work of art. After this glance at the creative state, let us look at the critical. The critical state has many merits, and employs some of the highest and subtlest faculties of man. But it is grotesquely remote from the state responsible for the works It affects to expound. It does not let buckets down into the unconscious It does not conceive in

sleep or know what It has said after It has said it. Think before you speak, is criticism's motto; speak before you think is creation's Nor is criticism disconcerted by people arriving from Porlock; in fact it sometimes comes from Porlock Itself.

What Mr. Forster has set forth can best be understood in the light of the road which has been taken by psychological, particularly psychoanalytic, criticism in the more than twenty years which have elapsed since the delivery of that lecture in 1947. The psychoanalytic critic of today would like to think that he comes from Xanadu rather than Porlock. He cannot claim that he consistently writes before he thinks, but his thinking is to some extent based on material which the bucket lowered into the depths has brought up for him.

What can he say about the permanent literary value of the work which he is discussing? He cannot of course undertake to give any absolute final judgment; it will hardly be suitable for him to do what so many academic critics do, that is, to report the state of critical opinion in the "in-group" that usually passes critical judgment in academic circles. I have suggested elsewhere that the function of the psychoanalytic critic in evaluation is to prognosticate rather than to judge. I can do no better than to quote here my preferred authority, Norman Holland [as quoted from *The Dynamics of Literary Response,* 1968]:

Saying a literary work is "good," then, from the point of view of our model, is predicting that it will pass the test of time; that it "can please many and please long"; that it is a widely satisfying form of play; or, more formally, that it embodies a fantasy WIth a power to disturb many readers over a long period of time and, built in, a defensive maneuver that will en able those readers to master the poem's disturbance.

A Tale of Two Cities does, it seems to me, give every indication, even apart from its past history, that it "can please many and please long." Its use of the dynamic scapegoat pattern with the employment of the pattern of multiple projection, which It has been my aim to point out in this essay, does indeed embody a fantasy, a fantasy which was disturbing to Dickens and is still undoubtedly disturbing to many readers, and has used that device of multiple projection as the defensive maneuver that enables readers to master that disturbance. In that sense, there seems to be little doubt about the continuance of the perennial popularity of this often maligned but still frequently read novel of Dickens' later period.

But all of that is really by the way. Criticism of the kind which I have attempted is designed to furnish information rather than critical judgment, even of a prognostic nature; it is the kind of criticism which was described by Arthur Symons in his introduction to the *Biographia Literaria* of Coleridge:

The aim of criticism is to distinguish what is essential in the work of a writer. It is the delight of the critic to praise; but praise is scarcely part of his duty. What we ask of h1m is that he should find out for us more than we can find out for ourselves

Source: Leonard Manheim, "A Tale of Two Characters' A Study in Multiple Projection," in *Dickens Studies Annual,* 1970, pp 225-37.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Lindsay shows how events in Dickens' personal life strongly influenced the plot and characters of A Tale of Two Cities.

Charles Dickens was in a driven demoniac state of mind when the idea for *A Tale of Two Cities* came to him. The bracelet he sent to Ellen Lawless Ternan had fallen into the hands of his wife Kate: and he was determined to end his marriage and to seduce Ellen. But he was in the midst of the rehearsals which had finally brought himself and Ellen together; and he could not pause to think, Amid Kate's tears, Forster's disapproval and a generally unnerving situation, he carried on in his furious possessed fashion, determined to have his own way and yet to keep his hold on the public; and in the midst of this spiritually and physically racked condition, as he was holding back his agony of mind by acting and producing *The Frozen Deep,* the central idea of the novel burst upon him.

So much we know from his own statement. It is clear then that we should be able to find the Imprint of his ordeal, his tormented choice, in the novel. One would expect writers on his work to concentrate on tills problem; but so abysmally low is the standard of Dickens criticism that no one has even seriously raised the question at all.

Where then is the imprint of the situation to be traced? By solving this point we can begin to understand what the novel itself is about, and the part it plays in Dickens' development. One general aspect of the selection of theme is at once obvious. The deep nature of the breach he is making with all customary acceptances is driving him to make a comprehensive effort to grasp history in a new way. So far (except for *Barnaby Rudge)* he has been content to use certain symbols to define his sense of basic historical conflict and movement. Yet all the while the influence of Carlyle, both in his *French Revolution* and his prophetic works like *Past and Present,* has been stirring him with the need for a direct statement of the historical issue as well as a symbolic one; and now, as he is coming close to a full confrontation of his opposition to all ruling Victorian values, he feels the need to set his story of conflicting wills in a manifestly revolutionary situation: that on which he had so long pondered as holding the clue to the crisis of his own world.

He had read and re-read Carlyle's history, till its theme and material were richly present in his mind; and now he wrote to the master asking for a loan of the cited authorities. The story goes that Carlyle Jokingly sent him all his reference-books, 'about two cartloads.' And in the novel's preface Dickens wrote:

It has been one of my hopes to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book.

But though this need to make a general reconsideration of the nature of historical movement and change was certainly central in the Impulse that Dickens felt, he had to

fuse the overt theme with a more immediately personal nexus of emotion and imagery before it could take full grip of him. In the midst of his domestic misery and frenzied play-acting he did not feel simply an intellectual need to revalue history. The desire to break through obstructions and to mate with Ellen could turn into the desire to write about the French Revolution only if some image or symbol made him feel a basic coincidence between his own experience and the Revolution. What then was this image?

It was that of the Imprisoned Man in the Bastille. The Lost Man who has been jailed so long that he has become an automaton of oppressed misery; who has forgotten even the source of his wrong, the cause of his dehumanizing misery; who needs to break out of the deadly darkness of stone in order to become human again, to learn the truth and regain love.

Here then is the core of the novel. The originally-intended title was *Recalled to Life.* Though Dickens dropped this for the whole novel, he kept it for the first part, and it expressed the originating emotion of the story. *A Tale of Two Cities* is built up from the episode of Dr. Manette's unjust Imprisonment; and Its whole working-out is concerned with the effects of that unjust deprivation of light and joy: effects which entangle everyone round the Doctor and recoil back on his own head in unpredictable ways. The Doctor's fate is thus for Dickens both a symbol of the Revolution, Its deeds, causes, and consequences, and of himself, immured in a maddening cell of lies and cruelties, and seeking to break through into the truth, into a full and happy relationship with his fellows. It was the demented sense of environing pressures, of an unjust inescapable mechanism, which caught Dickens up in the midst of his wild mummery and gave him a sense of release when he determined to write the novel.

It has been pointed out (by T A. Jackson) that there is a close underlying similarity between the plot of *A Tale* and that of *Little Dorrit* (the preceding novel in which Dickens had at last fully marshaled his condemnation of Victorian society). Both Dorrit and Manette are imprisoned for a score of years; both are released by forces outside their control and then continue tormented by their jail experience. Dorrit is haunted by fear of social exposure' w!uch comes finally in the collapse of Merdle (the exposure of the theft basic in the economic system). Dorrit thus from one angle embodies Dickens's deep fears of the past, fears of being exposed, fears of being driven back on the terrible moment of loss which therefore threatens to return in exacerbated form. He also embodies the bad conscience of a whole society which dares not contemplate truly its origins. But in Manette the symbolism goes much deeper. The experience of oppressive misery has not merely twisted him, as it twisted Dorrit; it has broken down the whole system of memory in his psyche. The problem then is: What can restore consciousness? what can connect the upper and the hidden levels of the mind again? Manette is kept going by a blind exercise of the craft learned in the cell of oppression, and only the intrusion of events from the Revolution can bring him back to an active consciousness and release him from his obsession. But the drama of objectifying in action the pattern of memory, the repetition-compulsion which must be broken, inevitably brings its shocks, its apparent evocation of forces as destructive as those working from the traumatic level. The test hes in the way that evocation is faced, the

way it works out. So Manette finds that the bitterness engendered by his sufferings as an innocent wronged man has tangled him up in a net (inside a larger reference of social action and reaction, guilt and innocence) from which escape is possible only after a great sacrifice has been made. The old must die for the new to be born; man cannot attain regeneration without accepting its sacrificial aspect. In the story this appears in the struggle between Darnay and Carton for Manette's daughter, and the solution that mates Darnay and the girl, yet sends Carton to a regeneration in death.

In this dire tangle of moral consequences we see Dickens confronting his own confused situation and trying to equate his own moment of painful compelled choice with the revolutionary moment in which a definite break is made with the old, amid violent birth pangs, and makes possible the rebirth of life, the renewal of love and innocence.

The lacerated and divided state of Dickens's emotions at this moment of choice is revealed by the device of having two heroes who are practically twins in appearance and who love the same girl. Both Carton and Darnay are generous fellows, but one is morally well-organized, the other is fecklessly a misfit. The latter, however, by his devoted death reaches the same level of heroic generosity as his rival; indeed goes higher. His gesture of renunciation completes the ravages of the Revolution with its ruthless justice, and transforms them into acts of purification and redemption, without which the life of renewed love would not be possible.

Thus, in the story, Dickens gets the satisfaction of nobly giving up the girl and yet mating with her. He splits himself in the moment of choice, dies, and yet lives to marry the beloved, from whom the curse born out of a tainted and divided society is at last removed. And at the same time he is Manette, the man breaking out of a long prison-misery, who seeks only truth and justice, and whose submerged memory-drama projects itself as both the Carton-Darnay conflict and the socially-impinging dilemma that disrupts and yet solves that conflict.

There are thus a number of ambivalences in the story; and Dickens shows himself divided in his attitude to the Revolution itself. His petty-bourgeois fear of mass-movements is still alive; but the fascination of such movements, which stirred so strongly in *Barnaby,* is even keener than the fear. On the one hand he chugs to the moral thesis to defend the Revolution: the Old Regime was vilely cruel and bestialized people, it could not but provoke excesses in return as the bonds slipped. But this thesis, to which Carlyle had sought to give a grandiose religious tang, now merges for Dickens with a deeper acceptance:

Crush humanity out of shape once more under sunder hammers and It will twist Itself into the same tortured forms Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again and It will surely yield the same fruit according to its land.

Six tumbrels roll along the streets. Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter Time, and they shall be seen to be the carriages of absolute monarchs, the equipages of feudal nobles, the toilets of flaring Jezebels, the churches

that are not my Father's house but dens of thieves, the huts of millions of starving peasants.

This passage begins with the simple moral statement; but the tumbrels, conjured up as mere counterpoises to the feudal carriages, become emblems of a great purification sweeping away the reign of the old Iniquity. They express a ruthless *transformation* of society and are far more than an allegory of cruel tit-for-tat. Rather, they appear as forces of triumphant righteousness.

Throughout the book there runs this ambivalent attitude to the Revolution, shuddering, yet inclining to a deep and thorough acceptance. Not a blank-cheque acceptance, but one based on the subtle dialectics of conflict revealed by the story of Manette. For that story, symbolizing the whole crisis and defining its tensions in the depths of the spirit, makes a serious effort to work out the process of change, the rhythms of give-and-take, the involved struggles with their many inversions and opposed refractions, the ultimate resolution in death and love, in the renewal of life.

The working-out of the clash of forces is in fact more thoroughly done than in any previous work of Dickens. The weakness lies in the comparative thinness of characterization. The strain of grasping and holding intact the complex skein of the story is too much for Dickens at this difficult moment of growth. But his instinct is, as always, right. He needed this strenuous effort to get outside himself: no other way could he master the difficult moment and rebuild his foundations After it he could return to the attack on the contemporary world with a new sureness, with new thaws of drama, with new breadths of comprehension. The great works, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend,* were made possible. (I am not here dealing with those works; but It is interesting to note that the imprisonment-theme finds its completion in the contrasted and entangled themes of MISS Havisham and the old convict, the self-imposed prison of the traumatic moment and the socially imposed prison of the criminal impulse, both merging to express the compulsions of an acquisitive society.)

A Tale is not a successful work like the two novels that followed it, but they would never have been written without it. An inner strain appears in the rigidity of tension between the thematic structure and the release of character-fantasy. Such persons as Manette, however, show a new persistence of psychological analysis, and the Defarges show what untapped sources of dramatic force Dickens could yet draw on. The final falsification of the book's meaning came about through the melodrama based on its material, in which the emphasis put on Carton sentimentalized away all the profundities.

Lucie is meant to represent Ellen Ternan; but at this stage Dickens knows very little about the real Ellen, and Lucie is therefore a stock-heroine. Charles Darnay, the winning lover, has the revealing initials *Charles D* Dickens with his love of name-meanings can seldom resist leaving at least one or two such daydream-admissions among the names of a novel. Ellen was acting as Lucy in *The Frozen Deep* at the time when the novel's idea came.

Source: Jack Lindsay, *"'A Tale of Two Cities,"* in *Life and Letters,* Septeinber, 1949, pp. 191-204.

Adaptations

Dickens made a lot of money by reading selections from his works aloud before an audience. His own version of *A Tale of Two Cities,* which he prepared but never actually performed, was entitled *The Bastille Prisoner. A Reading. From "A Tale of Two Cities" In Three Chapters.* It was published by William Clowes of London, probably in the early 1860s. The text of *The Bastille Prisoner* can also be found in *Charles Dickens: The Public Readings,* published in Oxford by the Clarendon Press, 1975.

The 1935 MGM film *A Tale of Two Cities,* featuring Ronald Colman as Sydney Carton, Basil Rathbone as the Marquis St. Evremonde, and Elizabeth Allan as Lucie, received Academy Award nominations for *Best Picture* and *Best Editing* . It is still regarded as the best film version of Dickens's novel.

Burbank Films animated *A Tale of Two Cities* and released it in 1984. The film is available on videocassette.

PBS television's *Masterpiece Theatre* produced *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1991. It featured James Wilby, Serena Gordon, and John Mills in leading roles, and it is available on videocassette.

A Tale of Two Cities was recorded as a radio play by BBC Radio 4, featuring Charles Dance as Carton, John Duttine as Darnay, Maurice Denham as Dr. Manette, and Charlotte Attenborough as Lucie. It was released in the United States in 1989 by Bantam Doubleday Dell Audio, 1989.

Topics for Further Study

Investigate contemporary accounts of the French Revolution, concentrating on the "Terror"-the months between the summers of 1793 and 1794-and compare them to Dickens's own version of the story.

Compare the character of Maximilian Robespierre, the most powerful man in France during the "Terror," to that of the fictional Madame Defarge.

Many critics consider Sidney Carton and Charles Darnay as two sides of a single character. Some of them have suggested that this split in the novel reflects the split in Dickens's own life: at the tune he was writing, his marriage was breaking up and he was consorting with a younger woman. What evidence is there for this in the novel?

The title of the book *A Tale of Two Cities* refers to the two cities of Paris and London. Compare and contrast Dickens's presentation of the two. Why did the author consider them central to his story?

Dr. Manette is often said by other characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* to be "resurrected"-to have been rescued from the grave and brought back to life. Trace the way this theme of "resurrection" occurs throughout the novel.

Research the history of the Chartist Movement and other reform movements in Victorian Britain. What parallels does Dickens draw between the abuses of the French Revolution and the kind of society that opposed reform in England during his own life?

Compare and Contrast

1780s: At the end of the period known as the Enlightenment, most educated people believed that the universe was essentially knowable and operated by fixed laws capable of being understood by human beings.

1850s: With the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), conservative Victorians launched a backlash of religious fervor that spoke against scientific progress.

Today: With technological advances such as space travel and cloning, modern science appears to be able to correct almost any problem. As specialization within science increases, however, few people can know very much about a variety of sciences.

1780s: French thinkers and philosophers such as the Marquis de Montesquieu recommended an enlightened system of government with powers balanced and divided among different bodies.

1850s: After decades of political stagnation, England began to liberalize its franchise by extending the right to vote to all male citizens regardless of how little property they might own. Today: With the collapse of Communist governments worldwide, the democratic model established by the United States-on which the French Revolution was based-has become the model for most national governments.

1780s: The science of anatomy was in such a primitive state that new bones were still being discovered in the human body. The German Romantic poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe discovered one, later known as the intermaxillary bone, in 1784.

1850s: By this time in England, Jerry Cruncher's trade of body-snatching had been extinct for over twenty years, thanks to Parliament's Anatomy Act (1832). Modern medical science can replace portions of human anatomy with artificially made bones, or through transplant surgery substitute animal organs for human ones that fail. Because of the success of transplants, a need for human organs has resurrected the trade of body snatcher.

1780s: English sailors on board H.M.S. *Bounty* mutinied in the South Pacific when their captain Bligh cut their water ration in order to water his cargo of breadfruit trees. The sailors concealed themselves on Pitcairn Island and remained undiscovered for years.

1850s: Seafaring European explorers had identified most land masses and other Europeans were beginning to press into the continental interiors of Australia, North America, and Africa.

Today: Modem satellite technology can map the entire world within the space of a few days. Very few corners of the earth are still unknown to Europeans or their cultural descendants, the North Americans.

1780s: During the French Revolution, drinking was commonplace among all classes of society.

1850s: A "temperance movement" centered in Protestant countries (mostly English commonwealth and the United States) vilified alcohol consumption and tried to eliminate drinking on moral grounds.

What Do I Read Next?

Simon Schama's *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989) is a modern account of the people and events of the French Revolution that show how the rational goals of the Revolution mix with irrational elements of the same period.

The Pickwick Papers (first serialized 18361837), Charles Dickens's tremendously popular first novel, concentrates on the relationship between middle-class Mr. Pickwick and his lively Cockney servant Sam Weller.

A Christmas Carol, in *Prose: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* (1843) is Dickens's perennially popular story about how the spirits of Christmas turn an old miser's outlook back to humanity.

Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) is the story of a young man's slow advancement in society against the backdrop of mid-Victorian England.

War and Peace (1866) is Leo Tolstoy's study of Russian society during the period of the Napoleonic Wars and the French invasion of Russia.

Further Study

Cates Baldridge, "Alternatives to Bourgeois Individualism in *A Tale of Two Cities," Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* Vol 30, Autumn, 1990, pp. 633-54.

A Marxist reading which sees the book as sympathetic to the collectivist ideology of the Revolution.

Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution- A History,* 2 volumes, Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1838.

TIus work by the famous Victorian author and critic is traditionally credited with providing the inspiration for Dickens's scenes of Revolutionary life in France during the period covered in *A Tale of Two Cities.*

Dickens Studies Annual, Vol. 12, Southern Illinois University Press, 1983.

A collection of essay ranging across an array of topics about the novel.

John Drinkwater, "The Grand Manner. Thoughts upon *A Tale of Two Cities," Essays of the Year,* London: Argonaut, 1929-1930, pp 3-14.

In this essay, Drinkwater examines the manner in which *A Tale of Two Cities* reveals Dickens's creative talent.

K. J. Fielding, "Separation-and *A Tale of Two Cities," Charles DICkens' A Critical Introduction,* London. Longmans, Green, 1958, pp. 154-68.

A biographical essay that examines the simi1arities between Dickens's own falling marriage and the separation and loneliness of Dr. Manette

Lawrence Frank, *Charles Dickens and the Romantic Self,* University of Nebraska Press, 1974.

Sees Darnay, not Carton, as the novel's focus and relates the character to Dickens's life.

"Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities'* The Poetics of Impasse," *American Imago,* Volume 36 (1979), pp. 215-44; reprinted under title "The Poetics of Impasse," *Charles Dickens and the Romantic Self* by Lawrence Frank, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984, pp 124-50.

Frank looks at the characters of Sidney Carton and Charles Darnay in *A Tale of Two Cities* psycho-analytically, seeing Carton as Darnay's doppelganger trying to bring the Frenchman to be aware of his guilty feelings toward Dr Manette.

Barton R Friedman, "Anti-history: Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities,"* in *Fabricating History. English Writers on the French Revolution,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 145-71.

Friedman provides a useful guide to further Criticism of Dickens's novel and draws parallels between the work and the genre of the Gothic Romance.

Michael Goldberg, *Carlyle and Dickens,* University of Georgia Press, 1973.

Analyzes the influence of Carlyle and his *The French Revolution* on Dickens.

Albert D. Hutter, "Nation and Generation in *A Tale of Two Cities," PMLA,Vol.* 93, May, 1978, pp 748-62.

A psychological reading in which the clash of aristocrats of the *ancien regime* and the revolutionaries is also a clash of parents and children.

Leonard Manheim, "A Tale of Two Characters. A Study in Multiple Projection," in *Dickens Studies Annual,* Vol. 1, edited by Robert B. Partlow, Jr, Southern Illinois University Press, pp. 225-27.

Relates Darnay and Carton biographically to Dickens, viewing them as projections of Dickens's idealized self.

Andrew Sanders, *The Companion to* A Tale of Two Cities, Unwin Hyman, Ltd., 1988.

Chronologically arranged annotations to allusions in the novel likely not to be known by modern readers.

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Ruth Glancy, *A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens's Revolutionary Novel,* Boston, MA. Twayne Publishers, 1991

Norman Page, "Introduction," *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, edited by Norman Page, Rutland, VT Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1994, pp. xxiii-xxxii.

Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, *A Tale of Two Cities, Saturday Review,* December 17, 1859, pp. 741-43; reprinted in *The Dickens Critics,* edited by George H Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr., Ithaca, NY. Cornell University Press, 1961, pp. 38-46.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

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Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
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- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

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NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

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A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

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□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

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Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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