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Literature Teaching Unit

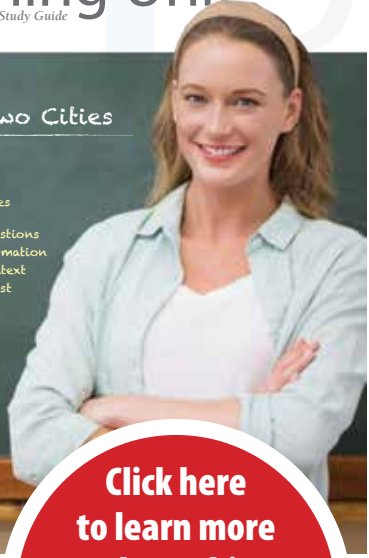
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



A Tale of Two Cities

by Charles Dickens

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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 **Prestwick House**

P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938
www.prestwickhouse.com
800.932.4593

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A Tale of Two Cities

Notes

This historical novel, which takes place at the time of the French Revolution, presents the French Revolution as the natural or fated consequence of the social ills of the times. The growing poverty in which the masses of people lived and the oppression they suffered at the hands of the aristocracy were the proximate causes for the civil unrest that led to the French Revolution.

Keeping in mind that Dickens originally wrote the novel for a weekly publication, notice how he maintains the suspense and interest of his readers by providing cliff-hangers at the end of many chapters. Note the first and last lines in the novel, too; no other novel in English has an opening and closing as well known as the first and last lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*.

All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classic edition of *A Tale of Two Cities*, copyright 2005.

A Tale of Two Cities

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. describe parallelism in Dickens' style and identify examples of it in the novel.
2. discuss the extent to which this novel meets the four criteria for an historical novel.
3. relate incidents in the story which illustrate the author's views on the following:
 - capital punishment
 - the horrors of prisons
 - the dangers of mob rule
 - the ideal woman
 - horrible ways to die.
4. cite events from the novel to support that Dickens believes in fate and show that the events in the protagonist's life (Darnay's) are inevitable consequences resulting from the tide of history.
5. explain how the author uses foreshadowing to heighten suspense and create interest in the following ways:
 - using imagery to set the mood for the action to come
 - suggestively titling each chapter
 - including cliff-hangers to end many of the chapters.
6. recognize the difference between third-person and first-person narration and indicate when the point of view changes.
7. identify the author's use of personification and discuss how he employs it to touch the emotions of the reader.
8. trace the development of the major theme in this story, rebirth through sacrifice, as it applies to:
 - Dr. Manette
 - Sydney Carton
 - Charles Darnay.

A Tale of Two Cities

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Considering that the book was written in installments for weekly publication, discuss how Dickens used chapter titles, foreshadowing, and cliff-hanger endings to maintain interest in his story each week.
2. Write a brief character sketch of Madame Defarge. Do you think she is justified in wanting Lucie and her family executed?
3. Why does Monsieur Defarge sympathize with Dr. Manette and his family?
4. Cite incidents in the novel to support this theme: As a force of nature, love is stronger than hate.
5. How does the phrase “recalled to life” impact the life of Jerry Cruncher?
6. Support or refute the following statement: Mr. Lorry is a consummate businessman and a loyal friend.
7. Contrast the characters Sydney Carton and Mr. Stryver. Which do you find more interesting?
8. In what ways may Darnay be said to be a man with a strong social conscience?
9. Do you think Lucie Manette had any power to help Carton mend his wasteful ways?
10. What epithet is used to describe each of the following characters: Madame Defarge, Mr. Lorry, Lucie, Dr. Manette, Miss Pross, and Jerry Cruncher?
11. When and why does Dr. Manette retreat from his life and begin making shoes again?
12. Define symbolism and explain the meanings of the following symbols in the novel: the color red, water, and Lucie’s hair.
13. What were the proximate causes given in this book for the French Revolution?
14. What is Dickens’ opinion of capital punishment?
15. Refer to the text to support or refute the following statement: Dickens is sympathetic to the plight of the French peasants but is opposed to mob rule.
16. Discuss the three examples of the existence of doubles in this novel. How do they add suspense and interest to the story?

A Tale of Two Cities

Book the First: Recalled to Life

Chapter 1: The Period

Vocabulary

blunderbusses – short muskets
conceded – granted as a privilege
contraband – smuggled goods
epoch – a particular historical period
incredulity – disbelief
potentate – one who wields great power
requisition – state of being called upon to perform a duty
revelations – acts of communicating truth or making it known
superlative – excellent
turnkeys – persons in charge of prisoners' keys

1. The first sentence in this novel is one of the most famous first lines in the history of literature. How is it also an example of parallelism?

2. Find the reference in this first chapter to the Continental Congress of 1775 that sent a list of complaints to the Parliament. What is Dickens' opinion of this list?

Chapter 4: The Preparation

Vocabulary

acquit – perform a duty and release from obligation
drawer – person who removes liquor from its container
gradations – advances by regular degrees
packet – passenger boat
pecuniary – pertaining to money
pier-glass – large, high interior
piscatory – relating to fish
supplicatory – beseeching, expressing earnest entreaty

1. Many critics believe the character of Lucie Manette represents Charles Dickens' ideal woman. Briefly describe Lucie and list the qualities she possesses that might make her Dickens' ideal woman.

2. What connection did Mr. Lorry have to Miss Manette when she was a small child?

3. Why is it necessary for Mr. Lorry and Lucie to travel together to Paris?

4. What are the blank forms for consignment mentioned in this chapter? How do they contribute to Mr. Lorry's need for secrecy and his use of the code "Recalled to Life"?

5. Support or refute the following statement: The wild-looking woman who comes to Lucie's aid is a caricature of a loyal British servant.

Chapter 7: Monseigneur in Town

Vocabulary

cowed – intimidated
episcopal – relating to government by a hierarchy
escutcheon – shield bearing a coat of arms
manifest – clearly apparent

1. What is almost comic about the way Dickens illustrates the excesses enjoyed by the Monseigneur, a character representing the upper class of France?

2. Briefly list the noble ideas that the Monseigneur believes to be true.

3. Who is the Farmer General, and what is his relationship to the Monseigneur?
