



A Tale of Two Cities Study Guide

by Jeannie Buchholz

For the novel by Charles Dickens

CD Version



Progeny Press

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A Tale of Two Cities Study Guide
A Progeny Press Study Guide
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Synopsis

“Recalled to life!” is the phrase running through the mind of Mr. Lorry, an agent of Tellson’s Bank, as he travels from London to Dover in the year 1775. In Dover he meets young Lucie Manette, who after believing she was orphaned at the age of two, learns that her father is still alive. They travel on to France where they find Dr. Manette under the care of his former servant, Ernest Defarge, in the St. Antoine quarter of Paris. After being imprisoned in the Bastille for 18 years, Dr. Manette is in a pitiable mental state, and Miss Manette takes him back to London.

Five years pass, and Dr. Manette has regained physical and mental vigor and has set up a medical practice. He and his daughter are called to testify against Charles Darnay, a Frenchman accused of treason due to his suspicious travels between France and England. But Darnay is acquitted when a witness admits that Darnay’s close resemblance to Sydney Carton, a lawyer in the court room, makes positive identification impossible.

Both Darnay and Carton are infatuated with the lovely Miss Manette. Because Carton sees himself as incapable of bettering himself, he does not feel worthy to ask Lucie to marry him. Darnay does marry Lucie, and imparts to her father the secret of his true identity. The shock of this discovery causes Dr. Manette to revert back to his deteriorated mental state while Lucie and Charles are away on their honeymoon. He recovers before their return with the assistance of their trusted friend Mr. Lorry, and their domestic life continues peacefully for many years.

In France, however, the oppressed lower classes are preparing for the revolution, and the Defarges are in the midst of it.

After the start of the Revolution, Darnay returns to France to aid an imprisoned former servant. Revealed as an aristocrat and emigrant, Darnay himself is imprisoned. Dr. Manette and Lucie follow Darnay to France. There they, Mr. Lorry, and Sydney Carton witness the ravages of the aftermath of the French Revolution as they struggle to gain Darnay’s release.

Book Three
Chapters 4–7

“I have saved him.”

Vocabulary:

An *antonym* of a word is another word that means the opposite of the first word. A *synonym* of a word is another word that means the same or nearly the same thing as the first word. For each of the vocabulary words below, write an antonym and a synonym to demonstrate your understanding of its meaning.

	<u>Antonym</u>	<u>Synonym</u>
1. inviolate	_____	_____
2. slake	_____	_____
3. redundant	_____	_____
4. jocosely	_____	_____
5. arraigned	_____	_____
6. inclement	_____	_____
7. embellish	_____	_____

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Personification:

Personification is a figure of speech in which an author attributes human qualities to an object, an animal, or an idea. List two examples from this section of reading in which Dickens uses *personification* to describe the guillotine.

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What tone or attitude toward the guillotine does Dickens create through the use of this personification?

Questions:

1. Where does Lucie go every afternoon from two to four o'clock? Why?
2. Who was the wood-cutter who worked near the spot where Lucie stood every day?
3. What game does the wood-cutter play with his wood? What does this, along with his remarks to Lucie, tell us about his character?
4. What is the Carmagnole? What impression does it make on Lucie?

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5. What mystery is introduced in the last paragraph of Chapter 5?

6. Outline Darnay's arguments in his own defense.

7. What does the jury's decide after hearing the testimonies of Darnay and Manette? How does the crowd respond?

8. At the end of Chapter 7, Darnay is again denounced. Who has denounced him?

Analysis:

9. Describe the condition of the Tribunal that sits in judgment and how the cases are conducted. Does it seem that prisoners would get a fair trial? Explain your answer.

10. In Book 2 of *A Tale of Two Cities* we see Dr. Manette as an emerging man, but still dependent on his daughter and easily affected by any reference to his past pain. Now, in Book 3, he faces much stronger, more vivid reminders of his past imprisonment, but he comes out as a stronger man. What might explain this change?

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11. As the character of Dr. Manette changes, how do the relationships with his family and his associates change? How do those affected respond to the change?

12. The time of the revolution was not only a time of political change in France, but also of religious change. List some sentences or phrases from near the end of Chapter 4 that give a sense of the religious climate of the time. From these statements, what can you conclude about the patriots' views towards religion?

13. Dickens makes two biblical allusions in the following statement:

The name of the strong man of Old Scripture had descended to the chief functionary who worked it, but, so armed, he was stronger than his namesake, and blinder, and tore away the gates of God's own Temple every day.

Who is the "strong man" referred to in the first allusion? Read 1 Cor. 3:16, 17 and explain the second allusion. According to these verses, what will be the result of the patriots' actions?

14. Throughout these chapters, Dr. Manette is determined to save Charles. He continually reassures Lucie that he will save him. At the end of Chapter 6, he confirms, "I have saved him," and the statement is repeated at the beginning of Chapter 7. Why might this statement of fact be so important to Dr. Manette?

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Dig Deeper:

15. In this section of reading, Dr. Manette discovers that because of his past suffering, he now has great influence among the patriots. This helps him gain the release of Darnay.

Sometimes it's difficult for us to see any good coming from the pain and trials that we or others have suffered. Read Philippians 1:12–14. In this passage, what good did the apostle Paul see happening as a result of his imprisonment? Read 2 Corinthians 12:7–10. How does Paul regard his affliction in this passage?

16. In what ways have you seen others use the pain and suffering of their past to help others? Is there some way you can use things that have happened to you to help other people?

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8. The title of Chapter 12 is “The Fellow of Delicacy” and refers to Stryver. The title of Chapter 13 is “The Fellow of No Delicacy” and refers to Carton. The irony is that Stryver demonstrates little or no delicacy—he acts boastfully, he insults Mr. Lorry and Miss Manette, he is loud and coarse. Carton, on the other hand, goes to Lucie very humbly and with only her interest at heart, pledging to die for her if necessary. Carton acts with “delicacy.”

Dig Deeper:

9. Stryver is saying he has less reason or need to be pleasant or nice to people than Carton does because he has plenty of money and influence. These verses tell us that we are always to love others as ourselves, no matter what our, or their, circumstances.

10. Answers will vary.

Book Two, Chapters 14–16:

Vocabulary:

1. b; 2. j; 3. c; 4. k; 5. a; 6. f; 7. d; 8. l; 9. e; 10. i; 11. g; 12. h

Questions:

1. The mob is much like the crowd during the trial of Darnay—they are looking for excitement about something they don’t fully understand. They are wild, out of control, and destructive. They take over the funeral procession, driving the hearse to the church and burial-ground, bury the dead, and continue to spend their energy in vandalism of anything at hand. They finally disperse when it is rumored that the Guard is coming. Jerry joins the procession, but at the churchyard he remains behind to confer with the undertakers.

2. In this section of reading, Jerry is revealed to be a grave-robber. A funeral means that he will have business to attend to that night. Some doctors used to hire grave robbers to steal bodies so they could study human anatomy.

3. The funeral was Roger Cly’s.

4. Jerry had not had a successful night “fishing,” and believes that her prayers were working against him. He feels she is to blame for their poverty.

5. These people are fellow conspirators with the Defarges. They are waiting for news about the fate of Gaspard. They have a “prevalent absence of mind,” not really interested in their games of cards or dominoes. They feign idleness in case a spy might look into the shop.

6. The tall one was Gaspard, who wrote “BLOOD” on the wall with spilled wine. He was also the father of the child who was killed by the Marquis’s coach. The mender of roads first encountered him hanging from the chain underneath the Marquis’s coach. Now, 12 months after the Marquis’s death, Gaspard had been caught, imprisoned, and accused of the murder. He was finally hung on a gallows above the village fountain.

7. The story fills them with a desire for revenge, and gives them the authoritative manner of a tribunal. They are intent on taking action against Gaspard’s oppressors. The château and everyone connected with it are to be registered as doomed to destruction.

8. The “register” is a list of those who are targeted for execution by the conspirators. The “register” is what Madame Defarge is knitting. To record names, she knits certain symbols that she can decipher.

9. He cheers and carries on all day when he sees the king and queen and all the Court. His behavior would make them think that the monarchy would last forever. Actions like his could deceive them into false security.

10. A spy by the name of John Barsad is commissioned to their quarters. The police gives a full physical description of Barsad.

11. The rose is a sign for the patrons that someone not to be trusted has come into the store. They stop talking when they see the rose and gradually leave the wine-shop.

12. Barsad first uses flattery to pull Madame Defarge into conversation. He then gives her credit for saying and thinking things that she had not said to him, but which a revolutionary might think. He addresses Monsieur Defarge as Jacques, tries to get Defarge to express sympathy for Gaspard, and speaks of the neighborhood with familiarity. His final tactic is to share his knowledge of the circumstances of Dr. Manette and that Miss Manette was to marry the nephew of the Marquis. Only this revelation gave the spy any hint of Defarge’s feelings.

Analysis:

13. Answers will vary. Young Jerry asks his father whether his fishing rod gets rusty and whether he will bring home any fish. The tools of Jerry’s trade are referred to as “fishing tackle.” One of Jerry’s partners in grave-robbing is referred to as a “disciple of Izaak Walton,” author of *The Compleat Angler*. All are referred to as “fishermen.” When they begin to dig,