

Teacher Guide

Grades 9–12

A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens

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A TALE OF TWO CITIES

by
Charles Dickens

Teacher Guide

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Note

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Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Questions for Discussion

1. Describe Tellson's Bank. (*page 61—old fashioned, dark, ugly, conservative, "the triumphant perfection of inconvenience"*)
2. What happened to a person who committed a crime against the bank? (*As elsewhere in Britain, many criminals were executed for even minor crimes.*)
3. What does Jerry Cruncher do at Tellson's? (*He is an odd-job man, an occasional porter and messenger.*)
4. What clues does Dickens give about Jerry Cruncher's other job? (*His boots, clean after his day at Tellson's, were often covered with clay in the morning. His wife considers what he does to be immoral in some way. He has rusty fingernails.*)

Chapters Two & Three

Summary

The scene is the Old Bailey, the courthouse. Charles Darnay is about to be tried for treason, and Mr. Lorry and Dr. and Lucie Manette have been called as witnesses against him.

Questions for Discussion

1. What line on page 72 describes the judicial system at the Old Bailey? (*"Whatever is, is right."*)
2. Find lines that indicate why the spectators enjoy coming to the trials. (*"Oh, they'll find him guilty. Don't be afraid of the . . ."* *"Whatever gloss the spectators put on the interest, according to their several interests and powers of self-deceit, the interest was, at the root of it, ogreish."* *"The cause, who was being mentally arched, beheaded, and quartered by the hood, the . . ."*)
3. Of what was Darnay accused? (*treason—secret correspondence with the King of France*)
4. Who is John Barsad? (*an English patriot called as a witness against Darnay, who tells us that he is not altogether credible. We learn that Barsad was in prison, had gotten in trouble for checking out cards, and owes Darnay money.*)
5. Who is Roger Cly? (*another witness against Darnay; Both Barsad and Barsad are probably paid witnesses.*)
6. "Mr. Attorney General" corresponds to whom in our legal system? (*the prosecuting attorney*) "Mr. Solicitor General"? (*defense attorney*)
7. How does Lucie feel about testifying to Darnay's presence and activities on the boat? (*She feels guilty and somewhat ashamed, doesn't want to cause him any trouble, and stresses that he treated her father with great kindness.*)

Activity: Attribute Web

As students read through Book the Second, they can make attribute webs for Lucie Manette, Charles Darnay, Dr. Manette, Mr. Lorry, Sydney Carton, Defarge, and Madame Defarge. An attribute web is simply a visual representation of a character from the novel. They provide a systematic way for the students to organize and recap information and thoughts they have. In group discussion about the completed webs, the teacher can ask for backup from the novel. If your students have never used attribute webs before, you might introduce the activity by having the students fill in webs for themselves.

How Character Looks

- _____
- _____
- _____

How Character Acts & Feels

- _____
- _____
- _____

Character:

When Character Lives

- _____
- _____
- _____

What Others

- _____
- _____
- _____

Chapter Four

Summary

Darnay and Sydney Carton have dinner together and find out more about each.

Questions for Discussion

1. Has Dr. Manette completely recovered from his ordeal in prison? (*He is still brooding over the past, and Lucie is the only one who can help him through the bad times.*)

Character Review

Reproduce the chart below either on the chalkboard or on individual worksheets. Have the students complete the chart as a whole-class activity or individually as homework.

	Lives In	Nationality (country)	He/She Wants Most	Type*
Mr. Lorry				
Lucie Manette				
Dr. Manette				
Charles Darnay				
Sydney Carton				
Mr. Stryver				
John Barsad				
Roger Cly				
Jerry Cruncher				
M. Defarge				
Mrs. Defarge				
Gaspard				
Gabelle				
The Marquis				
Mende				
Roast				

*good character, villain, comic character, not sure yet

Plot Review

Dickens' chapters divide the novel conveniently into main events and give clues to the content of each chapter. Beginning with the first chapter in Book the First, ask the students to complete a two-sentence summary of the main event(s) of each chapter read so far.

Prediction

Have the students make predictions about some of the coming events in the novel. They should be able to justify their predictions.

Chapter Sixteen

Summary

John Barsad, the Old Bailey spy who testified against Darnay, reappears as a spy in the wine-shop. The Defarges learn that Charles Darnay is the nephew of Monsieur the Marquis, and that he is going to marry Lucie Manette.