



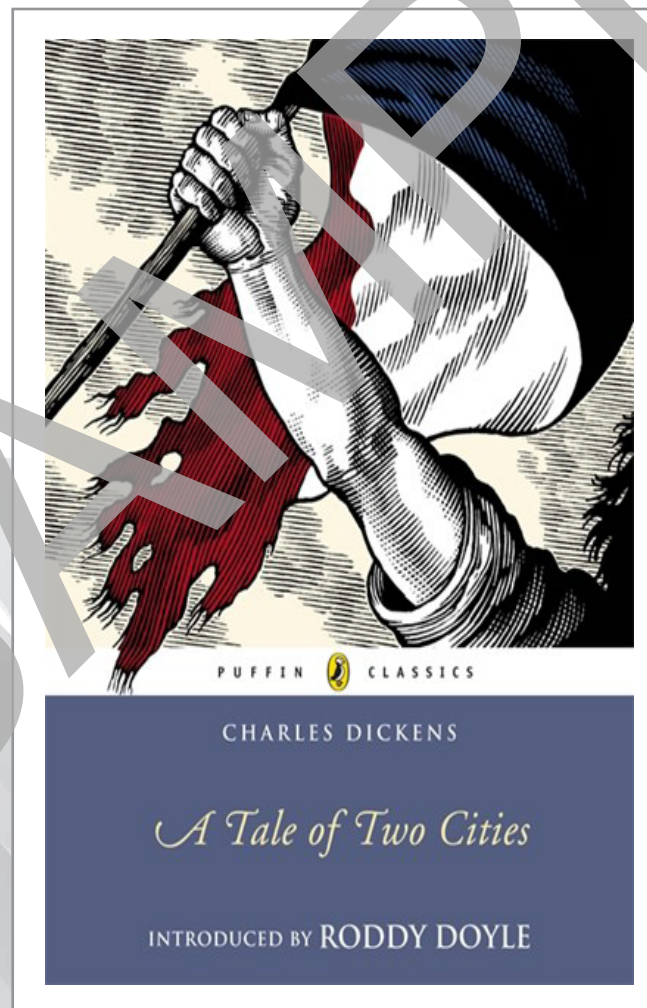
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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**ISBN 978-1-50204-234-7**

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## Background Information

(Note: You may wish to have your students research the French Revolution, Dickens' life, and the political climate of Dickens' England. The information below is given in the event that you want to furnish students with background yourself.)

### About the Author

Charles Dickens was born into a large family plagued with financial problems. When Charles was 12, his father was sent to debtor's prison. Charles had to quit school and was sent to work in a shoe-dye factory, where he learned about the working conditions in such places and found out there was no protection for child laborers.

Fortunately, his father inherited some money and the family was reunited after only a few months—but the experience stuck with the boy, who would grow to champion the downtrodden.

At 15, Charles became a clerk in a law firm. This, and a later job as a reporter covering parliamentary debates, helped to further shape his social conscience. In 1836, Charles began his fiction-writing career with character sketches that showed his immense talent for showing individual eccentricities as both comic and pathetic. Later that year, he soared to international fame when *The Pickwick Papers*, in serialized form, was released. Dickens then became editor of a monthly magazine, *Bentley's Miscellany*, in which *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* were serialized. In 1840, he started a weekly periodical, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in which *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* were presented. Ten years later he founded another weekly journal, *Household Words*.

In addition to his career as a journalist, editor, and novelist, Dickens was renowned for public readings of his work which brought audiences to sympathetic tears and uproarious laughter. While his writings pointed out the injustices suffered by the poor, he found other ways to address the issue of social reform. He established a home for reformed prostitutes and pushed for legislation to improve education, housing, and sanitation.

His marriage to Catherine Hogarth produced ten children, but the strain of his career and his outside interests (which included an affair with an actress) proved too much, and the marriage dissolved after 23 years.

Dickens had great faith in the middle class but was disillusioned by the ethics of greed that seemed to govern the new commercial interests. He also believed the judicial system was too corrupt to be of any help in righting the wrongs he saw. After a lifetime of working to effect social change, Dickens died a bitter man. He is considered to be one of the finest of all English storytellers, and is a master of wit and social satire. His most outstanding novels include those mentioned above as well as *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*, *David Copperfield*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Great Expectations*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

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## Chapter One

### Summary

Conditions in England and France are described. The year is 1775.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the first paragraph. How were the times both good and bad? (*Art, technology, and literature were advancing while greed, individual freedom, and the respect for life were deteriorating.*)
2. Who is the "King with a large jaw" in England? (*King George III*) Who is the "Queen with a plain face" in England? (*Charlotte Sophia*) Who is the "King with a large jaw" in France? (*King Louis XVI*) Who is the "Queen with a fair face" in France? (*Marie Antoinette*)
3. Dickens wrote "...it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the state preserves of loaves and fishes that things in general were settled forever." Summarize the conditions to which Dickens was referring. (*Aristocrats made all the money by passing laws that taxed the poor. The poor were hungry and sickly, but too afraid to oppose the harsh government.*) What could happen? (*a revolution*)
4. What is "this certain movable framework"? (*the guillotine*)

## Chapter Two

### Pre-Reading

Have the students locate Dover on a map of England. Explain that the Dover Road was famous for the number of robberies that took place on it. As students read, have them look for descriptive words Dickens used to create an ominous mood. (*nervous, disturbed, evil, clammy, reek, quavering*)

### Summary

We meet Mr. Jarvis Lorry, who is traveling the Dover Road. He is brought a message by Jerry Cruncher. His reply is "Recalled to life."

### Questions for Discussion

1. Where did the message for Jarvis Lorry come from? (*Tellson's Bank, Lorry's workplace*)
2. What is the message? (*"Wait at Dover for Mam'selle."*)
3. What is Mr. Lorry's reply? (*"Recalled to life."*)
4. Does Jerry understand the message? (*no*) What do you think the message and reply could mean?

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### 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**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**How Character Acts & Feels**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Character:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Where Character Lives**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**What Others Say**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter Four

### Summary

Darnay and Sydney Carton have dinner together, and we 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.*)