

A Tale of Two Cities



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES DICKENS

Born to a naval clerk, Dickens moved with his family to London at age 10. When his father was briefly imprisoned for debt, Charles worked long days at a warehouse. He left school at age 15, but read voraciously and acquired extensive knowledge through jobs as a law clerk, court reporter, and journalist. As a novelist, Dickens was successful from the start and quickly became the most famous writer in Victorian England for his unforgettable characters, comic ingenuity, and biting social critique. He also enjoyed huge popularity in America where he made several reading tours. He worked tirelessly, producing a magazine *Household Words* (later *All the Year Round*) and cranking out still-famous novels including [Oliver Twist](#), [Bleak House](#), [Great Expectations](#), and [David Copperfield](#). Dickens had ten children with his wife Catherine Hogarth, but their marriage was never happy and Catherine left him after Dickens had an affair with the actress Ellen Ternan. Dickens died in 1870 and is buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Like the American Revolution, the French Revolution was launched in the spirit of rational thought and political liberty. But these ideals of the 18th-century Enlightenment period were soon compromised when the French Revolution devolved into the "Terror"—a violent period of beheadings by the very citizens who overthrew the tyrannous French monarchy. The French Revolution cast a long shadow into 19th-century Britain, as industrialization seemed to divide the English population into the rich and poor. Many people feared the oppressed working class would start an English Revolution, but a series of political compromises and wake-up calls like Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* helped to avert the potential crisis.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Sir Walter Scott pioneered the genre of historical fiction. In novels like *Waverley*, Scott places fictionalized characters against a war-time historical tableau. Scott also uses a narrator who alternately explains, editorializes, preaches, and jokes, like Dickens's own characteristic narrative voice. Historical fiction evolved with works like George Eliot's [Middlemarch](#) with its multiple plot lines and realistic psychological detail. Scott, Dickens, and Eliot all use historical fiction to examine contemporary problems. They use the past to reflect the present in hopes of resolving its crises. Their novels explore how political history is shaped by individuals or how it shapes

them in turn.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *A Tale of Two Cities*
- **When Written:** 1859
- **Where Written:** Rochester and London
- **When Published:** 1859
- **Literary Period:** Victorian era
- **Genre:** Historical novel
- **Setting:** London and Paris
- **Climax:** Sydney Carton's rescue of Charles Darnay from prison
- **Antagonist:** French revolutionaries; Madame Defarge
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Serial fiction: Like many of Dickens's novels, *A Tale of Two Cities* was first published in installments in his magazine *All the Year Round*. Many Victorian novels were first published in serial parts and then later collected into books.

American favorite: Since its publication, *A Tale of Two Cities* has always been Dickens's most popular work in America.



PLOT SUMMARY

The year is 1775. On a mission for his employer, Tellson's Bank, Mr. Jarvis Lorry travels to Dover to meet Lucie Manette. On his way, Mr. Lorry receives a mysterious message and replies with the words "Recalled to life." When they meet, Mr. Lorry reveals to Lucie that her father, Dr. Alexandre Manette, who she thought was dead, is still alive. Dr. Manette had been secretly imprisoned for 18 years in the Bastille, but his former servant Monsieur Defarge, who now owns a **wine** shop in Paris that is a center of revolutionary activities, has smuggled Dr. Manette out of prison and hidden him in the store's attic. Meanwhile, Defarge's wife, Madame Defarge, secretly encodes the names of the Revolution's enemies into her **knitting**. Mr. Lorry and Lucie arrive in Paris to find Manette compulsively making shoes in a dark corner—prison has left him insane. Lucie lovingly restores him to himself and they return to London.

The year is 1780. In London, Charles Darnay stands trial for treason as a spy. Lucie and Dr. Manette attend, having met Darnay during their return from France. The defense lawyer is Mr. Stryver, but it is his bored-looking associate, Sydney

Carton, who wins the case. Carton points out how much he himself resembles Darnay in order to ruin the main witness's credibility.

In France, the wealthy aristocracy wallows in luxury and ignores the suffering poor. Marquis St. Evrémonde recklessly runs over and kills a child with his carriage. At his castle, he meets his nephew Charles Evrémonde (a.k.a. Darnay) who has returned to France to renounce his family. That night, the Marquis is murdered in his sleep.

Back in England, Charles, Stryver, and Sydney Carton all frequently visit Dr. Manette and Lucie. Mr. Stryver plans to propose to Lucie, but Mr. Lorry warns him that his proposal is unlikely to be accepted. Carton also admires Lucie; he tells her how she makes him believe that, despite his ruined past, he still has a shred of goodness deep within him. Charles obtains Dr. Manette's permission to marry Lucie, but Manette refuses to learn Charles's real name until the wedding day. On the wedding day, Dr. Manette relapses into his shoe-making madness after discovering that Charles is an Evrémonde. Mr. Lorry helps him recover. Charles and Lucie soon have a daughter of their own.

The year is 1789. Defarge leads the peasants in destroying the Bastille. He searches Dr. Manette's old cell and finds a letter hidden in the chimney. The new Republic is declared, but its citizens grow extremely violent, imprisoning and killing aristocrats. Charles's former servant, Gabelle, writes a letter from prison asking for help. Charles secretly leaves for Paris and is immediately taken prisoner. Mr. Lorry travels to Paris on bank business and is soon joined by Lucie and Dr. Manette. Because of his imprisonment, Dr. Manette is a local hero. He uses his influence to get Charles a trial, but it takes over a year. Every day Lucie walks near the prison hoping Charles will see her. Charles is finally freed after Dr. Manette testifies. But that very night, he is arrested again on charges brought by Monsieur and Madame Defarge.

Miss Pross and Jerry Cruncher have come to Paris to help. On the street, they run into Miss Pross's brother, Solomon Pross, whom Jerry recognizes from Charles's English trial as John Barsad. Sydney Carton also shows up and, threatening to reveal Barsad as a spy, forces his cooperation to help Charles.

At Charles's second trial, Defarge produces Dr. Manette's letter from the Bastille, which explains how the twin Evrémonde brothers—Charles's father and uncle—brutalized a peasant girl and her brother, then imprisoned Manette to protect themselves. Charles is sentenced to death and sent back to prison. Realizing his letter has doomed Charles, Dr. Manette loses his mind. That night, Carton overhears Madame Defarge at her wine shop plotting against Lucie and her daughter in order to exterminate the Evrémonde line. It is revealed that Madame Defarge was the sister of the peasants the Evrémondes killed.

Carton conspires with Mr. Lorry to get everyone in a carriage ready to flee for England. With Barsad's help, Carton gets into Charles's prison cell, drugs him, and swaps clothes with him. Barsad drags the disguised Charles back to Mr. Lorry's carriage, which bolts for England. Madame Defarge shows up at Lucie's apartment, but Miss Pross blocks her way. The two scuffle. When Madame Defarge tries to draw her pistol, she accidentally shoots herself. The blast deafens Miss Pross for life.

On his way to the **guillotine** in place of Charles, Carton promises to hold hands with a young seamstress, who has been wrongly accused. He dies knowing that his sacrifice was the greatest thing he's ever done.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonde) – Renouncing the terrible sins of his family, the Evrémondes, Charles abandons his position in the French aristocracy to make his own way in England. Charles believes in the revolutionary ideal of liberty, but is not a radical revolutionary. Instead, he represents a rational middle ground between the self-satisfied exploitation practiced by the old aristocracy and the murderous rage exhibited by the revolutionaries. Charles has a heroic sense of justice and obligation, as shown when he arranges to provide for the oppressed French peasantry, and later endangers himself in coming to Gabelle's aid. However, Charles is also deluded in thinking he can divert the force of history and change the Revolution for the better. Similarly, Charles constantly overlooks Sydney Carton's potential and must learn from his wife, Lucie, to have faith in Carton. Charles represents an imperfect but virtuous humanity in whose future we must trust.

Dr. Alexandre Manette – An accomplished French physician who gets imprisoned in the Bastille, and loses his mind. In his madness, Manette embodies the terrible psychological trauma of persecution from tyranny. Manette is eventually "resurrected"—saved from his madness—by the love of his daughter, Lucie. Manette also shows how suffering can become strength when he returns to Paris and gains a position of authority within the Revolution. Manette tries to return the favor of resurrection when he saves Charles Evrémonde at his trial. However, Manette is ultimately a tragic figure: his old letter from the Bastille seals Charles's fate. Falling once more into madness, Manette's story implies that individuals cannot escape the fateful pull of history.

Lucie Manette – The daughter of Dr. Manette, and Charles's wife. With her qualities of innocence, devotion, and abiding love, Lucie has the power to resurrect, or recall her father back to life, after his long imprisonment. Lucie is the novel's central

figure of goodness and, against the forces of history and politics, she weaves a "golden thread" that knits together the core group of characters. Lucie represents religious faith: when no one else believes in Sydney Carton, she does. Her pity inspires his greatest deed.

Sydney Carton – In his youth, Sydney Carton wasted his great potential and mysteriously lost a woman he loved. Now he's a drunk and a lawyer who takes no credit for his work. Carton has no hope for his life. Only Lucie understands his potential for goodness. In his selfless dedication to her and her family, Carton represents the transformative power of love. His self-sacrifice at the end of the novel makes him a Christ figure. By saving Lucie's family, Carton redeems himself from sin and lives on in their grateful memory.

Monsieur Defarge – The former servant of Dr. Manette, Defarge uses his Paris wine shop as a place to organize French revolutionaries. Like his wife, Madame Defarge, Defarge is fiercely committed to overthrowing tyranny and avenging injustice. Yet Defarge always retains a shred of mercy, and does not participate in his wife's plot to kill Lucie. This quality of mercy makes Defarge a symbol for the failed Revolution, which ultimately loses sight of its ideals and revels in the violence it causes.

Madame Defarge – The wife of Monsieur Defarge, Madame Defarge assists the revolutionaries by stitching the names of their enemies into her **knitting**. Madame Defarge wants political liberty for the French people, but she is even more powerfully motivated by a bloodthirsty desire for revenge, hoping to exterminate anyone related to the Evrémondes. Where Lucie Manette is the embodiment of pity and goodness, Madame Defarge is her opposite, a figure of unforgiving rage. Over the course of the novel she emerges as a kind of anti-Christ, completely devoid of mercy, and as such comes to symbolize the French Revolution itself, which soon spun out of control and descended into extreme violence.

Jerry Cruncher – By day, an odd-job man for Mr. Lorry. By night, a "resurrection man"—robbing graves to sell body parts to sketchy doctors. He complains about his wife's praying because it makes him feel guilty about his secret activities, but by the end of the novel he decides to give up his secret job and endorses praying, a sign that he hopes to be resurrected himself through the power of Christ.

Mrs. Cruncher – The wife of Jerry Cruncher (and mother of Young Jerry), Mrs. Cruncher's regular praying constantly upsets Cruncher, who feels that it interferes with his work. Though in fact her praying interferes only in the sense that it forces Cruncher to face the guilt he feels at his job robbing graves. By the end of the novel, Cruncher has himself given up his job and taken up his wife's practice of praying regularly.

Young Jerry – The son of Jerry Cruncher and Mrs. Cruncher. Young Jerry is just a boy, but he becomes curious about what

work his father goes off to do at night-time. He follows his father one night, and watches in terror as his father attempts to open up the grave of Roger Cly. Young Jerry then flees. Yet the next day Young Jerry asks his father what a "resurrection man" and to both his father's dismay and pride explains that he wants to be one when he grows up.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Marquis St. Evrémone – Charles's uncle and a cruel French aristocrat committed to preserving the power of the French nobility. He and his twin brother exemplify the tyrannical and uncaring aristocracy. When the Marquis is murdered, his corpse is a symbol of the people's murderous rage.

Mr. Jarvis Lorry – An older gentleman who works for Tellson's bank, Lorry is a model of loyalty and discretion. Lorry hides his emotions under the cover of "business," but he works hard to save the Manettes and to encourage Charles to become Lucie's husband.

Mr. Stryver – A lawyer who defends Charles Darnay. Stryver, as his name implies, only cares about climbing the professional ladder.

John Barsad (a.k.a Solomon Pross) – Barsad was born Solomon Pross, brother to Miss Pross, but then became a spy, first for the English, then later for the French government. He is an amoral opportunist. In England, he accuses Charles Darnay of treason.

Jacques Three – "Jacques" is the code name for every male revolutionary; they identify themselves by number. Jacques Three is a cruel, bloodthirsty man who represents the corruption of the Revolution's ideals. He controls the jury at the prison tribunals.

The Vengeance – A peasant woman from Paris and Madame Defarge's ultraviolent sidekick. Like Madame Defarge and Jacques Three, The Vengeance enjoys killing for its own sake, not for any reasonable political purpose.

The mender of roads (the wood-sawyer) – A French working man who represents how average people become seduced by the worst, most violent qualities of the Revolution.

Gabelle – A servant of Charles Evrémone who carries out Charles's secret charities. Gabelle is jailed simply by association with the aristocracy, showing how justice flies out the window during the Revolution.

Roger Cly – A spy and colleague of John Barsad who faked his death to escape prosecution.

Miss Pross – The long-time, devoted servant of Lucie Manette. She is Solomon Pross's sister, and hates the French.

Monseigneur – A powerful French aristocrat.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



TYRANNY AND REVOLUTION

Much of the action of *A Tale of Two Cities* takes place in Paris during the French Revolution, which began in 1789. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens shows how the tyranny of the French aristocracy—high taxes, unjust laws, and a complete disregard for the well-being of the poor—fed a rage among the commoners that eventually erupted in revolution. Dickens depicts this process most clearly through his portrayal of the decadent Marquis St. Evrémonte and the Marquis' cruel treatment of the commoners who live in the region under his control.

However, while the French commoners' reasons for revolting were entirely understandable, and the French Revolution was widely praised for its stated ideals of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," Dickens takes a more pessimistic view. By showing how the revolutionaries use oppression and violence to further their own selfish and bloodthirsty ends, in *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens suggests that whoever is in power, nobles or commoners, will fall prey to the temptation to exercise their full power. In other words, Dickens shows that while tyranny will inevitably lead to revolution, revolution will lead just as inevitably to tyranny. The only way to break this cycle is through the application of justice and mercy.



SECRECY AND SURVEILLANCE

Everybody in *A Tale of Two Cities* seems to have secrets: Dr. Manette's forgotten history detailed in his secret letter; Charles's secret past as an Evrémonte; Mr. Lorry's tight-lipped attitude about the "business" of Tellson's Bank; Jerry Cruncher's secret profession; and Monsieur and Madame Defarge's underground activities in organizing the Revolution. In part, all this secrecy results from political instability. In the clash between the French aristocracy and revolutionaries, both sides employ spies to find out their enemies' secrets and deal out harsh punishments to anyone suspected of being an enemy. In such an atmosphere, everyone suspects everyone else, and everyone feels that they must keep secrets in order to survive.

Through the secrets kept by different characters, *A Tale of Two Cities* also explores a more general question about the human condition: what can we really know about other people, including those we're closest to? Even Lucie cannot fathom the depths of Dr. Manette's tortured mind, while Sydney Carton

remains a mystery to everybody. Ultimately, through Lucie's example, the novel shows that, in fact, you *can't* ever know everything about other people. Instead, it suggests that love and faith are the only things that can bridge the gap between two individuals.



FATE AND HISTORY

Madame Defarge with her **knitting** and Lucie Manette weaving her "golden thread" both resemble the Fates, goddesses from Greek mythology who literally controlled the "threads" of human lives. As the presence of these two Fate figures suggests, *A Tale of Two Cities* is deeply concerned with human destiny. In particular, the novel explores how the fates of individuals are shaped by their personal histories and the broader forces of political history. For instance, both Charles and Dr. Manette try to shape and change history. Charles seeks to escape from his family's cruel aristocratic history and make his own way in London, but is inevitably drawn "like a magnet" back to France where he must face his family's past. Later in the novel, Dr. Manette seeks to use his influence within the Revolution to try to save Charles's life from the revolutionaries, but Dr. Manette's own forgotten past resurfaces in the form of an old letter that dooms Charles. Through these failures of characters to change the flow of history or to escape their own pasts, *A Tale of Two Cities* suggests that the force of history can be broken not by earthly appeals to justice or political influence, but only through Christian self-sacrifice, such as Carton's self-sacrifice that saves Charles at the end of the novel.



SACRIFICE

A Tale of Two Cities is full of examples of sacrifice, on both a personal and national level. Dr. Manette sacrifices his freedom in order to preserve his integrity. Charles sacrifices his family wealth and heritage in order to live a life free of guilt for his family's awful behavior. The French people are willing to sacrifice their own lives to free themselves from tyranny. In each case, Dickens suggests that, while painful in the short term, sacrifice leads to future strength and happiness. Dr. Manette is reunited with his daughter and gains a position of power in the French Revolution because of his earlier incarceration in the Bastille. Charles wins the love of Lucie. And France, Dickens suggests at the end of the novel, will emerge from its terrible and bloody revolution to a future of peace and prosperity.

Yet none of these sacrifices can match the most important sacrifice in the novel—Sydney Carton's decision to sacrifice his life in order to save the lives of Lucie, Charles, and their family. The other characters' actions fit into the secular definition of "sacrifice," in which a person gives something up for noble reasons. Carton's sacrifice fits the Christian definition of the

word. In Christianity, God sacrifices his son Jesus in order to redeem mankind from sin. Carton's sacrifice breaks the grip of fate and history that holds Charles, Lucie, Dr. Manette, and even, as the novel suggests, the revolutionaries.



RESURRECTION

Closely connected to the theme of sacrifice is the promise of resurrection. Christianity teaches that Christ was resurrected into eternal life for making the ultimate sacrifice (his death) for mankind. Near the end of *A Tale of Two Cities*, Carton remembers a Christian prayer: "I am the resurrection and the life." As he goes to the guillotine to sacrifice himself, Carton has a vision of his own resurrection, both in heaven and on earth through Lucie and Charles's child, named Sydney Carton, whose life fulfills the original Carton's lost potential. Yet Carton's is not the only resurrection in the novel. After having been imprisoned for years, Dr. Manette is "recalled to life" by Lucie's love. Jerry Cruncher, meanwhile, works as a "resurrection man" stealing body parts from buried corpses, but by the end of the novel he gives it up in favor of praying for a holier resurrection of his own.



IMPRISONMENT

In the novel, the Bastille symbolizes the nobility's abuse of power, exemplified by the unjust imprisonment of Dr. Manette by Marquis St. Evrémonte. Yet the Bastille is not the only prison in *A Tale of Two Cities*. The revolutionaries also unjustly imprison Charles in La Force prison. Through this parallel, Dickens suggests that the French revolutionaries come to abuse their power just as much as the nobility did.

The theme of imprisonment also links to the theme of history and fate. For instance, when Charles is drawn back to Paris because of his own past actions, each checkpoint he passes seems to him like a prison door shutting behind him.

symbolizes the moral stains on the hands of revolutionaries. The transformation of wine to blood traditionally alludes to the Christian Eucharist (in which wine symbolizes the blood of Christ), but Dickens twists this symbolism: he uses wine-to-blood to symbolize brutality rather than purification, implying that the French Revolution has become unholy.



KNITTING AND THE GOLDEN THREAD

In classical mythology, three sister gods called the Fates controlled the threads of human lives. *A Tale of Two Cities* adapts the classical Fates in two ways. As she **knits** the names of her enemies, Madame Defarge is effectively condemning people to a deadly fate. On the other hand, as Lucie weaves her "**golden thread**" through people's lives, she binds them into a better destiny: a tightly-knit community of family and close friends. In each case, Dickens suggests that human destinies are either predetermined by the force of history or they are tied into a larger pattern than we as individuals realize.



GUILLOTINE

The **guillotine**, a machine designed to behead its victims, is one of the enduring symbols of the French Revolution. In *Tale of Two Cities*, the guillotine symbolizes how revolutionary chaos gets institutionalized. With the guillotine, killing becomes emotionless and automatic, and human life becomes cheap. The guillotine as a symbol expresses exactly what Dickens meant by adding the two final words ("or Death") to the end of the French national motto: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death."



SHOES AND FOOTSTEPS

At her London home, Lucie hears the echoes of all the **footsteps** coming into their lives. These footsteps symbolize fate. Dr. Manette makes **shoes** in his madness. Notably, he always makes shoes in response to traumatic memories of tyranny, as when he learns Charles's real name is Evrémonte. For this reason, shoes come to symbolize the inescapable past.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



WINE

Defarge's wine shop lies at the center of revolutionary Paris, and throughout the novel **wine** symbolizes the Revolution's intoxicating power. Drunk on power, the revolutionaries change from freedom fighters into wild savages dancing in the streets and murdering at will. The deep red color of wine suggests that wine also symbolizes blood. When the Revolution gets out of control, blood is everywhere; everyone seems soaked in its color. This



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *A Tale of Two Cities* published in 2003.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ 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, 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.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 5

Explanation and Analysis

Through these famous first lines of Dickens's novel, he sets the scene for one of the major focal points that the book will return to again and again. Today, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" has become so well known as to almost count as a cliché, but it's worth asking what Dickens really means in the passage. How does this series of oppositions function? Each time the narrator attempts to characterize one aspect of the contemporary age in which he's living, he modifies it, backtracking with its precise opposite. "Epoch" and "season" suggest that the book will deal with a specific moment in history, but the words also suggest a cyclical nature to history, in which certain elements inevitably return.

Indeed, there's a tension throughout the passage between the chronicle of a particular moment and a sweeping characterization of history in general. By adding the pronoun "we" into the passage, Dickens broadens the scope of this process, even as he also seems to limit it, again, to a certain time and place. Still, this series of oppositions seems to suggest the futility of gaining any final, conclusive perspective on historical events – or at least one that would convince us that we humans are in control. Instead, each time we try to get a handle on vast historical processes, they slip out of our reach, as if unfolding beyond our will and beyond our capacity to fit them into available frameworks.

Book 1, Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other. A solemn consideration, when I enter a great city by night, that every one of those darkly clustered houses encloses its own secret; that every room in every one of them encloses its own secret; that every beating heart in the hundreds of thousands of breasts there, is, in some of its imaginings, a secret to the heart nearest it!

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

As the chapter begins, before the narrator returns to the events of the plot, he reflects upon the strangeness at the heart of human relationships. The narrator clarifies this thought by asking the reader to imagine a concrete circumstance, wandering through a "great city" at night. A city is perhaps particularly suited to the narrator's exploration of secrecy, given that it joins thousands or millions of people together in a relatively confined space, and yet these people often don't know each other and don't interact with each other.

However, the narrator is also interested in a slightly different problem – that is, even the people we *think* we know remain secret to us. Much of this novel will be taken up with characters' secrets, the degree to which fellow characters remain ignorant of those secrets (sometimes tragically so), and the contrast between characters who think they know other people and what they actually know about those people.

Nonetheless, the narrator does not seem to think that there is something *necessarily* foreign and strange about a person's character: instead, it simply is the case that people can so often remain mysteries to each other, failing to really plumb the depths of another's character. Indeed, the narrator's own task in telling the story presumes that he, at least, can know other people's characters – that he can break through the mystery that so often shrouds human contact.

Book 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ The children had ancient faces and grave voices; and upon them, and upon the grown faces, and ploughed into every furrow of age and coming up afresh, was the sign, Hunger. It was prevalent everywhere. Hunger was pushed out of the tall houses, in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was patched into them with straw and rag and wood and paper; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off; Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat. Hunger was the inscription on the baker's shelves, written in every small loaf of his scanty stock of bad bread; at the sausage-shop, in every dead-dog preparation that was offered for sale.

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 32-33

Explanation and Analysis

The narrative moves to Paris, where Lucie Manette will meet her long-lost father, and as it does so, the narrator lingers on the setting crossed by the group from England. This evocative scene is powerful in itself, but it is also significant in terms of what it foreshadows for the rest of the book's plot.

Hunger here is personified, described as "pushed out" and staring down. As a character itself, hunger can, we realize, have just as enormous effects in history as a human figure. The narrator describes the state of hunger as a state of desperation, so critical that it doesn't seem sustainable. Indeed, the desperation described in this passage will help to explain much of what takes place later, as those suffering reach a breaking point – while suggesting that such a breaking point may always have been inevitable in such a situation.

Book 1, Chapter 6 Quotes

☝☝ If you hear in my voice ... any resemblance to a voice that once was sweet music in your ears, weep for it, weep for it! If you touch, in touching my hair, anything that recalls a beloved head that lay on your breast when you were young and free, weep for it, weep for it! If, when I hint to you of a Home that is before us, where I will be true to you with all my duty and with all my faithful service, I bring back the remembrance of a Home long desolate, while your poor heart pined away, weep for it, weep for it!

Related Characters: Lucie Manette (speaker), Dr. Alexandre Manette

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 48

Explanation and Analysis

In this scene of reunification between Manette and his daughter, the pathos of Manette's sorry condition joins with the bittersweet attitude of Lucie in finding her father, whom she long thought dead, alive but old and confused. Manette seems to have recognized something of his wife in Lucie, and Lucie clings to this possibility, suggesting that she has come, in a way, to replace her mother, and to offer her father a chance for a new life with her. By creating a

correspondence between her own face and that of her mother, but also by making a contrast between Manette's former desolate home and the new, happy home that she hopes to make for him, Lucie stresses that it *is* possible to gain second chances.

For Lucie, it is as if her father had risen from the dead, since she never knew him to be alive. Learning of his presence is such a powerful feeling for her that it seems to be almost a miracle, spurring her to want to sacrifice anything for the sake of her father. This sentiment is only further prompted by her recognition of his prison-like environment, from which she hopes to rescue him.

Book 2, Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ Only his daughter had the power of charming this black brooding from his mind. She was the golden thread that united him to a Past beyond his misery, and to a Present beyond his misery: and the sound of her voice, the light of her face, the touch of her hand, had a strong beneficial influence with him almost always.

Related Characters: Dr. Alexandre Manette, Lucie Manette

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

Although Dr. Manette has been "resurrected" into new life by the care of his daughter Lucie, not all of the frightening power of his imprisonment has left him. He still tends to be brooding and gloomy, unable to entirely shake himself of the madness that had once enveloped his life. Still, he is clearly aware of and grateful for Lucie's strong-willed direction.

As a "golden thread," a charmed version of the threads woven by the Fates that direct our lives and the course of history, Lucie seems to possess the power to turn at least individual lives for the better, based only on her own love and commitment. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear whether or not Lucie's golden thread will prove more powerful than the Fates or history, or whether it is just one part of a greater universal plan, one in which her small actions ultimately cannot undo the all-powerful workings of Fate or history.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ Waste forces within him, and a desert all around, this man stood still on his way across a silent terrace, and saw for a moment, lying in the wilderness before him, a mirage of honourable ambition, self-denial, and perseverance. In the fair city of this vision, there were airy galleries from which the loves and graces looked upon him, gardens in which the fruits of life hung ripening, waters of Hope that sparkled in his sight. A moment, and it was gone. Climbing to a high chamber in a well of houses, he threw himself down in his clothes on a neglected bed, and its pillow was wet with wasted tears.

Related Characters: Sydney Carton

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

Carton is obviously in a more powerful position than Charles, who is on trial for his life, and yet Carton still envies the man, who seems to incarnate that "ambition, self-denial, and perseverance" that he has somehow lost. It is not clear exactly what has happened to Sydney Carton that has made him go awry: here, the narrator uses largely metaphorical language to suggest the gap between Carton's still romanticized, hopeful desires, and the state in which he now finds himself. Carton imagines just for an instant a kind of heaven on earth, but this vision cannot be reconciled with the "wilderness" that mostly directs his life.

Book 2, Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ Expressive signs of what made them poor, were not wanting; the tax for the state, the tax for the church, the tax for the lord, tax local and tax general, were to be paid here and to be paid there, according to solemn inscription in the little village, until the wonder was, that there was any village left unswallowed.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 119

Explanation and Analysis

The Marquis d'Evrémonde is driving from city to town in his regal carriage, passing scenes of poverty and desperation and yet failing to feel any sympathy for the people inhabiting them. Here, the narrator describes the village over which the Marquis rules, locating the source of its

poverty in the Marquis's own actions, having taxed the villagers to death. Nonetheless, this passage also makes clear that the Marquis is only one among several layers of rulers and institutions that have driven the village into the ground through crippling taxes. Here as elsewhere, the narrator characterizes such a scene as unsustainable, laying the groundwork for the rumblings of dissatisfaction and eventually revolution that will follow.

Book 2, Chapter 9 Quotes

☞ "Repression is the only lasting philosophy. The dark deference of fear and slavery, my friend," observed the Marquis, "will keep the dogs obedient to the whip, as long as this roof;" looking up to it, "shuts out the sky."

Related Characters: Marquis St. Evrémonde (speaker), Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonde)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

Charles has confided to his uncle, the Marquis d'Evrémonde, about his love for a "sacred object," Lucie, but the Marquis quickly dismisses his idealistic goals. While Charles has embraced the new Enlightenment philosophy of equality and freedom – so much so that he is struggling to reconcile his own heritage with his beliefs – his uncle is steadfastly committed to the aristocratic tyranny that is all he knows (and which benefits him so immensely).

Here, the Marquis suggests that his own beliefs are part of a greater truth about history. Only by repressing people who are weaker can those in power hope to stay that way. By blocking out the sky, as it were, aristocrats can even make people lose their hope for a better life, implying that what they experience is all there is. But the Marquis's words also implicitly suggest that aristocrats may well be in danger if they do fail to "shut out the sky," and if people begin to hope for the possibility of a better life.

Book 2, Chapter 10 Quotes

☞ He had loved Lucie Manette from the hour of his danger. He had never heard a sound so sweet and dear as the sound of her compassionate voice; he had never seen a face so tenderly beautiful, as hers when it was confronted with his own on the edge of the grave that had been dug for him.

Related Characters: Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonde), Lucie Manette

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 135

Explanation and Analysis

Charles, having abandoned his aristocratic heritage, now lives in London and continues to be in love with Lucie, even going as far as to proclaim his love for her to her father. Here, we once again see the power that Lucie can hold over people. Charles is described as emerging out of a grave thanks to Lucie's beautiful face. Like Lucie's father, he feels that he is in some way raised from the dead thanks to the goodness that emanates from her. While Charles had all the riches he could have wanted thanks to his aristocratic family, for him such a heritage is confining far more than it is liberating – it is his love for Lucie that is freeing.

Book 2, Chapter 13 Quotes

☝☝ For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything. If my career were of that better kind that there was any opportunity or capacity of sacrifice in it, I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you. Try to hold me in your mind, at some quiet times, as ardent and sincere in this one thing. The time will come, the time will not be long in coming, when new ties will be formed about you [...] O Miss Manette, [...] when you see your own bright beauty springing up anew at your feet, think now and then that there is a man who would give his life, to keep a life you love beside you!

Related Characters: Sydney Carton (speaker), Lucie Manette

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

Sydney Carton has gone to visit Lucie and finds himself proclaiming his love for her, at the same time that he recognizes, though in a way that is excruciating for him, how little he deserves her because of his (still mysterious) past. Lucie nonetheless expresses a conviction that Carton can lead a better life. Here, Carton expresses his profound gratefulness to Lucie by vowing to sacrifice anything for her, even his life.

Carton's words seem to foretell a moment in the future of great change for Lucie. Perhaps he is thinking of Stryver, or

perhaps he's simply realized that Lucie should and will marry someone who deserves her, but he wants to make sure that she knows of his feelings for her. Even if he doesn't realize it, Carton is in fact prophetic, as his vow of sacrifice will indeed have to be tested later on in the novel.

Book 2, Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ Another darkness was closing in as surely, when the church bells, then ringing pleasantly in many an airy steeple over France, should be melted into thundering cannon; when the military drums should be beating to drown a wretched voice, that night all potent as the voice of Power and Plenty, Freedom and Life. So much was closing in about the women who sat knitting, knitting, that they their very selves were closing in around a structure yet unbuilt, where they were to sit knitting, knitting, counting dropping heads.

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 193-194

Explanation and Analysis

The would-be revolutionaries have failed to save the life of the Marquis d'Evrémonde's murderer, Jacques, and now they are beginning to plot in revenge – in what will turn out to be a tragic and violent cycle in which many of the revolutionaries become no better than the tyrants they hope to depose. Here, the narrator steps back from the immediate plot at hand to suggest larger historical processes at work across all of France. Describing the darkness "closing in," the narrator suggests that these processes are or have become inevitable – there is no turning back from the process of revolution now.

Another way to describe this inevitability is through the workings of fate, which is here, as elsewhere, linked to the image of women knitting – in particular, Madame Defarge stitching the names of those to be killed, but also the classical Fates threading out the plot of mortal lives. The way these knitters "close around" a structure being built creates a mental image of a kind of prison, which emerges as a metaphor for the coming revolution, the impossibility of stopping it, and the cycle of violence it unleashes that no one can escape.

Book 2, Chapter 20 Quotes

☝☝ My husband, it is so. I fear he is not to be reclaimed; there is scarcely a hope that anything in his character or fortunes is reparable now. But, I am sure that he is capable of good things, gentle things, even magnanimous things.

Related Characters: Lucie Manette (speaker), Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonte), Dr. Alexandre Manette

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 217

Explanation and Analysis

Charles has spoken critically about Sydney Carton at dinner with the entire household that evening, and now, later at night and in private, Lucie gently reproves him for being overly harsh towards the man. Unlike Charles, Lucie is convinced that Carton may yet prove himself redeemable – he may yet have another, new life ahead of him.

Lucie is not overly naive or idealistic; she does, after all, acknowledge that Carton's past character and fortunes count a great deal against him. In that sense, he has created his own situation, and cannot be liberated from the choices he has made. At the same time, however, Lucie may well be thinking of the conversation she had with Carton, one that helped to convince her of his good intentions and possibility for redemption. It is also worth noting that in many cases in the novel it is Lucie's belief that someone can redeem themselves that allows that gives that person the strength to actually achieve redemption.

Book 2, Chapter 21 Quotes

☝☝ The sea of black and threatening waters, and of destructive upheaving of wave against wave, whose depths were yet unfathomed and whose forces were yet unknown. The remorseless sea of turbulently swaying shapes, voices of vengeance, and faces hardened in the furnaces of suffering until the touch of pity could make no mark on them.

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator shifts from London to Paris, where the stirrings of revolutionary activity are growing stronger. In this poetic passage, the narrator describes revolution as made up of individual voices and desires than of an

indistinguishable mass, which gains power from the physical visceral force of many bodies.

This image of revolutionaries is not exactly inspiring or idealistic. Instead, it's rather ominous. The destructive power of this wave of revolutionaries is described as not all that different from the overpowering, tyrannical force of the aristocrats against whom the revolutionaries are supposedly fighting. Although their reasons for rebelling may be justified, the book suggests, the group-think of the mass – of the mob – can easily lead to its own kind of tyranny.

Book 2, Chapter 23 Quotes

☝☝ 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.

Related Characters: Marquis St. Evrémonte

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 241

Explanation and Analysis

Four radicals have set fire to the castle overlooking the village, and now an enormous blaze is raging, threatening to engulf the entire castle. While a man has run out of the castle and begged for the villagers to help, here they are described as staring "stonily" back at him. For so long, the aristocrats have rebuffed the villagers' desperate need for help and assistance in the face of poverty. Now, they see a chance to deny those in power what they never could receive themselves. (Note here the stark contrast to Lucie's way of interacting with the world, in which she offers forgiveness to all despite their history, and how that contrasts to how the aristocrats and revolutionaries treat each other).

Here, too, the death of the Marquis d'Evrémonte is metaphorically reenacted. Burning at the stake was a punishment long associated with heretics: now it is a powerful aristocrat, a kind of "heretic" to the ideals of the revolutionaries, who is punished by being imagined as burning at the stake.

Book 2, Chapter 24 Quotes

☛ Like the mariner in the old story, the winds and streams had driven him within the influence of the Loadstone Rock, and it was drawing him to itself, and he must go. Everything that arose before his mind drifted him on, faster and faster, more and more steadily, to the terrible attraction. His latent uneasiness had been ... that he who could not fail to know that he was better than they, was not there, trying to do something to stay bloodshed, and assert the claims of mercy and humanity.

Related Characters: Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonte)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 252

Explanation and Analysis

Charles has received a letter from the Evrémonte family servant, Gabelle, who has been jailed merely because of his association with aristocracy, though he has been attempting to help Charles to work for good. Now Charles realizes that he must return to Paris, and that he has a chance not to escape his aristocratic heritage but to redeem it by doing everything he can to mitigate the violence of the revolution. Here the narrator refers to the famous poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Coleridge: the Loadstone Rock, in this poem and in elsewhere, exerts an almost mystical, but also scientifically magnetic, influence, drawing objects to itself.

For Charles, his return to Paris is part of his individual trajectory, an active choice made in order to reduce the violence of revolution and to make his own mark against the tyranny of both sides. At the same time, however, the comparison to the Loadstone Rock – that "terrible attraction" – suggests that Charles is ultimately subject to the same forces of fate and history as everyone else. He cannot but help playing his role in this process just like the others, and further suggests that regardless of the role he intends to play, he will end up playing whatever role history has in store for him.

Book 3, Chapter 1 Quotes

☛ Not a mean village closed upon him, not a common barrier dropped across the road behind him, but he knew it to be another iron door in the series that was barred between him and England. The universal watchfulness so encompassed him, that if he had been taken in a net, or were being forwarded to his destination in a cage, he could not have felt his freedom more completely gone.

Related Characters: Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonte)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 255

Explanation and Analysis

As Charles makes his way from London to Paris, he is increasingly aghast by how the values of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity that were supposed to have motivated the revolution have been distorted out of all recognition. He is suspicious of everything and everyone around him, not knowing whom he can trust, and unsure of the course history will take next.

At the same time, his journey to France, though undertaken of his own will, begins to seem more and more like a prison sentence, as with each step Charles's path seems to become more irrevocable. The further he goes into revolutionary France, the less able he is to turn back, to change course. Instead it seems that he is walking into his own fate – not in a positive, optimistic way, as if he were choosing his own destiny, but rather as though he is willingly walking into a trap of inevitability and will be able to find no way out.

Book 3, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ As these ruffians turned and turned, their matted locks now flung forward over their eyes, now flung backward over their necks, some women held wine to their mouths that they might drink; and what with dropping blood, and what with dropping wine, and what with the stream of sparks struck out of the stone, all their wicked atmosphere seemed gore and fire. The eye could not detect one creature in the group free from the smear of blood.

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

Lucie, Dr. Manette, and Mr. Lorry are gathered together, anxious about the fate of Charles in the prison of La Force. As they peer out the window of the place where they are staying, the frightening, wild nature of the revolutionaries becomes immediately clear. There is an obvious connection established here between wine and blood. Not only are the liquids physically similar, but one can lead to another: drunk

on wine, the revolutionaries lose their inhibitions and are even more likely to become frenzied and violent.

The images of this passage almost suggests a vision of hell rather than of an earthly city, and indeed the book wants to stress just how "wicked" – on a spiritual, even metaphysical level – the formerly oppressed peoples have become now that they have seized power. The tragedy is that they indeed were, so recently, oppressed, and yet now in their rebellion they have become shockingly brutal tyrants themselves.

Book 3, Chapter 4 Quotes

☝☝ Above all, one hideous figure grew ... the figure of the sharp female called La Guillotine. It was the popular theme for jests; it was the best cure for headache, it infallibly prevented the hair from turning grey, it imparted a peculiar delicacy to the complexion, it was the National Razor which shaved close: who kissed La Guillotine, looked through the little window and sneezed into the sack. It was the sign of the regeneration of the human race. It superseded the Cross. Models of it were worn on breasts from which the Cross was discarded, and it was bowed down to and believed in where the Cross was denied.

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 283-284

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the book introduces the symbol of the guillotine – not only one of the most significant symbols of the French Revolution, but also a crucial symbol in the novel, so much so that it almost takes on the characteristics of a character. Here the narrator personifies La Guillotine as a "sharp female," both a human being and a kind of apparent cure for all the ills of the country. As the revolutionaries transition from dissatisfied subjects to a frenzied mass to a powerful group themselves, so too do they begin to institutionalize and formalize their tools of destruction. Rather than the blood- and wine-spattered outfits they've worn previously, now they have access to a cold tool of torture whose sleekness and simplicity belies its destructiveness.

By contrasting the guillotine to the cross, the book suggests that a new sense of morality, or rather immorality, has gripped the country, and while the Christian lessons of love and mercy are dismissed, the power of destruction as embodied in the guillotine is lauded and embraced.

Book 3, Chapter 6 Quotes

☝☝ Looking at the Jury and the turbulent audience, he might have thought that the usual order of things was reversed, and that the felons were trying the honest men.

Related Characters: Charles Darnay (a.k.a. Charles Evrémonte)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 292

Explanation and Analysis

As Charles faces the crowd and the jury at his trial, he is struck by the sense that the supposed institutions of justice have been hollowed out of their significance: in their place is a bloodthirsty crowd whose sense of justice is twisted – so much so that it might formerly have been thought of as *injustice*.

Once again, the novel stresses that those suffering under tyranny have become tyrants themselves, in a tragic revolutionary cycle that is portrayed as more inevitable than actively chosen. Violence leads, always, to more violence; tyranny leads to new tyranny. In such a world, everything seems inside out, including the status of the felons and the honest, the judged and the judges.

Book 3, Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ Miss Pross recalled soon afterwards, and to the end of her life remembered, that as she pressed her hands on Sydney's arm and looked up in his face, imploring him to do no hurt to Solomon, there was a braced purpose in the arm and a kind of inspiration in the eyes, which not only contradicted his light manner, but changed and raised the man.

Related Characters: Miss Pross, Sydney Carton, John Barsad (a.k.a. Solomon Pross)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 310

Explanation and Analysis

Sydney Carton has appeared almost out of nowhere and has identified John Barsad to Jerry as Solomon Pross, an opportunistic man who has no principles and will easily betray one side to another. However, he is also the brother of Lucie's servant Miss Pross, and before dealing with Solomon, Carton escorts Miss Pross back home, showing himself to be gallant and polite.

Unlike Solomon, Carton understands that the bonds of family and love can be powerful, so he doesn't dismiss Miss Pross's entreaties to him not to hurt Solomon. Miss Pross is impressed by the inner light and inspiration that seem to emanate from Sydney Carton – a sense of the man that we haven't really seen in him earlier in the book. She does sense the contradiction of this light with his easygoing manner, but this only further makes her recognize how much he must have changed.

Book 3, Chapter 9 Quotes

☛ Before that unjust Tribunal, there was little or no order of procedure, ensuring to any accused person any reasonable hearing. There could have been no such Revolution, if all laws, forms, and ceremonies, had not first been so monstrously abused, that the suicidal vengeance of the Revolution was to scatter them all to the winds.

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 327

Explanation and Analysis

As yet another trial of Charles begins, the narrator describes the procedure, or rather lack thereof, of the tribunal condemning him. Once again the revolutionaries are shown to have little regard for justice, only a twisted sense of revenge and anger characterizing how they enact judgments. However, here the narrator also wants to make clear that the revolutionaries' disregard for justice and goodness hasn't come out of nowhere. Instead, it ultimately stems from the fact that the aristocrats who oppressed them for so long had an equally low regard for "laws" and "forms" that were supposed to guide and direct their actions.

As a result, the actions of the revolutionaries are not excused, but rather explained, shown as taking part in a longer history of tragic injustice that has denied liberty to so many.

Book 3, Chapter 10 Quotes

☛ The boy's eyes, which had been fixed on mine, slowly turned to the looker-on, and I saw in the two faces that all he said was true. The two opposing kinds of pride confronting one another, I can see, even in this Bastille; the gentleman's, all negligent indifference; the peasants, all trodden-down sentiment, and passionate revenge.

Related Characters: Dr. Alexandre Manette (speaker), Marquis St. Evrémonte

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 337

Explanation and Analysis

This passage is part of a somewhat complex framed narrative – that is, a story within a story (within a story!). Monsieur Defarge is reading aloud a letter written by Dr. Manette, in which he related the story of a young boy horrifically mistreated by the Evrémonte family, and who soon died at their hands. Writing the letter from the Bastille, where he was imprisoned, Dr. Manette drew a broader lesson from the conflict between the peasant boy and the aristocratic Evrémontes. In a tone of remarkable prescience, given the way that revolution would develop afterwards, the letter suggests that the "negligent indifference" of the aristocrats would clash with the "passionate revenge" of the peasants until the conflict would reach a breaking point, and violence would inevitably result.

Book 3, Chapter 14 Quotes

☛ There were many women at that time, upon whom the time laid a dreadfully disfiguring hand; but, there was not one among them more to be dreaded than this ruthless woman, now taking her way along the streets ... imbued from her childhood with a brooding sense of wrong, and an inveterate hatred of a class, opportunity had developed her into a tigress. She was absolutely without pity.

Related Characters: The Vengeance

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 375

Explanation and Analysis

La Vengeance strides through the streets, heading towards Lucie's apartment in the hopes of gaining evidence against her that will be of use in condemning Lucie to death. While we have now learned that Madame Defarge was the sister of the peasant family ruthlessly tortured by the Evrémontes, the book portrays her and her sidekick as still more ruthless, the tyranny of aristocracy only begetting the even more pitiless tyranny of revolutionaries. Just as the narrator has personified objects like the guillotine before, this passage portrays the woman as a powerful but inhuman

concept, that of Vengeance.

In addition, by depicting the woman as one extreme example of a nonetheless widespread type, the book underlines once again just how widespread the terror of the revolution has become. In a way, Madame Defarge's terrible childhood and many like it have set this inevitable process in motion, though the book does not as a result excuse the actions of people like her and her sidekick.

Book 3, Chapter 15 Quotes

☞ "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

Related Characters: Sydney Carton (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 389

Explanation and Analysis

Earlier, the narrator has suggested that the figure of the Christian cross, signifying forgiveness, resurrection, and sacrifice for a greater cause, has been replaced by the ruthless terror of the guillotine. Now, Sydney Carton's monumental sacrifice suggests that all is not lost. Here, Carton repeats lines spoken by Jesus in the New Testament Gospels, and also repeated at Sunday mass for Christians. As he comforts another woman sentenced to death, and prepares to die himself, he draws solace from these words of faith.

Carton shows himself committed to an alternative view of justice and redemption than that located in the indiscriminate violence of the revolution, and in so doing he offers the hope that a new life, even on Earth as well, might be possible. The novel has powerfully portrayed how violence leads only to more violence, how injustice leads to more injustice, in a kind of historical fate that is impossible to escape. But Carton's sacrifice, following the spirit of Jesus's long ago sacrifice, offers the possibility of a way to

end that vicious cycle of violence, through the Christian ideals of forgiveness, mercy, love, and sacrifice.

☞ Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine. All the devouring and insatiate Monsters imagined since imagination could record itself, are fused in the one realisation, Guillotine. ... Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar 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 kind.

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 384

Explanation and Analysis

As Sydney Carton's execution approaches, the carts are described with an allusion to the carrying of Jesus on the cross to his own crucifixion, similarly paraded through the town and subject to ridicule and condemnation. Once again, the guillotine is personified, becoming the image of pure evil itself with "insatiable" hunger for blood. And once again, wine is described in relation to blood, though here the metaphor is slightly different: "wine" for the guillotine is the bodies of people that will be killed under the guillotine's power, with which the guillotine nourishes itself.

This dark, haunting scene concludes with the suggestion that these events are not limited to one time and place alone. Any time there is boundless oppression and injustice, the passage suggests, people will rise up against it, and they will be just as susceptible to replacing injustice with injustice, oppression with oppression, in turn. While the book never excuses the revolutionaries' violence, it does place the root of the inevitable process of tyranny and revolution in the original oppression of those in power.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." The year is 1775, a time that the narrator describes through a set of contradictions: wisdom and foolishness, belief and disbelief, optimism and doubt, light and darkness, hope and despair. The narrator compares this historical era to his own present moment in Victorian England.

In France, the government spends wildly and hands out harsh sentences to anyone connected with a crime, no matter how minor. In England, burglars infest the cities—even the Mayor of London gets robbed—and not even frequent hangings can stop the wave of crime.

The narrator tells an allegory of the Woodman and the Farmer—figures of the coming revolution who are silently at work. But the royalty in both England and France believe in their divine right to rule and don't notice the gathering storm.

The contradictions listed in the opening of the novel portray 1775 as an age of profound transition, full of promise and threat. The comparison to Dickens's Victorian times establishes the novel's use of the past to comment on the present.



The narrator extends the potential similarities between revolutionary France and England. Because of their injustices, both governments are sowing the seeds of discontent and political radicalism.



The Woodman stands for Death and the Farmer for Fate. Both, the narrator implies, will harvest the awful products of the monarchy's political mistakes.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

On a stormy night in late November 1775, the mail coach from London slogs its way toward Dover. Three passengers sit in the carriage. Everyone is suspicious of each other. When he hears an approaching horse, the coach driver stops the carriage: it's a messenger seeking one of the passengers, Mr. Jarvis Lorry of Tellson's Bank. Mr. Lorry recognizes the man as Jerry Cruncher, who works odd-jobs for Tellson's.

Jerry gives Mr. Lorry a note that reads "Wait at Dover for Mam'selle." In reply, Mr. Lorry tells Jerry to return to Tellson's with the message: "Recalled to life." The coach drivers overhear the mysterious message but can make nothing of it. Neither can Jerry, though he worries that "recalling to life" would be bad for his other work.

The port city of Dover was the main port for passage between England and France. The road from London to Dover, battered by storm and fraught with suspicion and highwaymen, represents the worsening political conditions in both countries.



"Recalled to life" sets up the theme of resurrection. At both ends of the book, someone liberates another person from prison and saves them from the grave. Jerry's odd thought establishes the mystery of what his other work might be.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

The narrator reflects on the strangeness of the human condition: how we are all mysteries to each other. No matter how close, we always remain alienated from each other by our unique individualities.

Half asleep in the mail coach, Mr. Lorry dreams of wandering through the inner vaults of Tellson's Bank and finding everything safe. He also dreams that he "was on his way to dig someone out of a grave." In his dream, he sees a cadaverous man who has been buried alive for 18 years. Mr. Lorry asks the man if he cares to live, then also asks over and over if the man will "come and see her?" Sometimes the man cries out that seeing "her" would kill him, at other times that he must see her immediately.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

In Dover, Mr. Lorry takes a room at the Royal George Hotel. The 17-year-old Lucie Manette arrives that same afternoon, having received vague instructions to meet a Tellson's Bank employee at the Royal George Hotel regarding some business of her "long dead" father. Though he describes his news as just a "business matter," Mr. Lorry struggles with his emotions as he explains the "story of one of our customers"—Lucie's father, Dr. Manette.

20 years ago, Dr. Manette, a renowned doctor, married an English woman and trusted his affairs to Tellson's Bank. One day, Manette disappeared, having been jailed by the authorities and taken to a secret prison. Rather than tell Lucie the truth, Lucie's mother told her that her father was dead. Lucie's mother herself died soon afterwards, and Mr. Lorry took Lucie from Paris to London.

Mr. Lorry braces Lucie for a shock: her father is not dead. He has been found, though he's a shell of his former self. Manette is now in the care of a former servant in Paris, and Mr. Lorry tells the astonished Lucie that he and she are going to go to Paris so that she can "restore [her father] to life." Lucie's servant, the loud and red-haired Miss Pross, rushes in and shouts at Mr. Lorry for upsetting Lucie. Mr. Lorry asks her to travel with them to France.

One of the main themes in all of Dickens's work is the search for mutual understanding and human sympathy.



Mr. Lorry's dream foreshadows Dr. Manette's situation. Lorry's questions about whether the man "cares to live" and whether he wants to see "her," link the idea of Manette's potential return to life with a woman, suggesting that it is love that will return him to life. The dream of digging up someone from a grave also foreshadows Jerry's other job as a grave robber.



Mr. Lorry works like a secret agent for Tellson's Bank. He uses the cover of "business" to assist in political activities (like freeing Dr. Manette). But he also uses "business" rhetoric to hide his feelings and protect others' emotions, even when explaining a father's history to his daughter.



Lucie learns her own and her father's real history—her father suffered imprisonment at the hand of a tyrannical government. Lucie's history makes her a figure who connects the "two cities" of Paris and London, and in A Tale of Two Cities, characters cannot escape their histories.



Though freed from jail, Manette is still imprisoned by his traumatic history. It now becomes clear that Lucie is the woman whom Lorry in his dream hoped could save Manette. Miss Pross is a stereotypical British servant, brash, devoted to her mistress.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

Outside a wine shop in the poor Parisian suburb of Saint Antoine, a cask of **wine** accidentally falls and breaks in the street. Everyone in the area scrambles to drink the runoff: cupping their hands, slurping it out of gutters, licking it off the fragments of the broken cask. It turns into a game with dancing and singing in the streets. The wine has stained the ground, stained people's skin and clothes. Someone jokingly uses the spilled wine to scrawl the word "Blood" on a wall.

The jubilation fades and the street returns to its sad, dirty, impoverished condition. The people are sick and aged, beaten down by hunger.

Monsieur Defarge, the owner of the wine shop, enters his store. From her position behind the counter, his wife, Madame Defarge, silently alerts him to the presence of Mr. Lorry and Lucie. Defarge ignores them, instead lamenting the condition of the people with three men, all of whom go by the name "Jacques" (a code name used by revolutionaries in France).

Once the "Jacques" have left, Mr. Lorry speaks with Monsieur Defarge. Defarge leads Mr. Lorry and Lucie up to his attic. The room is dark and kept locked for the sake of the inhabitant, Monsieur Defarge explains. Lucie leans on Mr. Lorry for support. Defarge opens the door and they see a white-haired man in the corner stooped over a bench and making **shoes**.

This scene is an extended metaphor for how people transform into a frenzied mob. It foreshadows the blood to be spilled in the Revolution. The writing on the wall alludes to the Biblical story (in Daniel) of Belshazzar's feast where a disembodied hand prophesied the fall of his empire.



Hunger and want are the conditions that fuel the revolutionary fire.



The code name "Jacques" does double service: because it is a common name, it both hides identity and also implies that this revolution is of the people. Lucie and Lorry's presence in Defarge's wine shop indicates that Defarge is Manette's former servant.



Because his mind was unoccupied in prison, Dr. Manette compensated by making shoes to occupy his hands. Now, even though he is free, he can't escape the prison of his own mind, so he continues to make shoes.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

The shoemaker is dressed in tatters. When Defarge asks him his name, he replies "One Hundred and Five, North Tower." Mr. Lorry then asks the shoemaker if he recognizes anyone. The shoemaker seems as if he does for a moment, but his face quickly clouds over.

Lucie approaches, with tears in her eyes. The shoemaker asks who she is. Noticing her blonde hair, he removes a necklace he wears and reveals a scrap of paper containing some golden threads of hair—stray hairs from his wife, which he has kept all these years as a spiritual escape from his imprisonment. Overcome by emotion, Manette struggles to recognize his daughter. Lucie rocks Manette's head on her chest like a child. She promises him that his agony has ended, and gives thanks to God.

Dr. Manette suffered so greatly in prison that his identity was virtually erased. He knows himself only by the room number in the Bastille, the prison in which he was held.



Lucie's golden hair reminds Manette of his wife's golden hair. These hairs, from before and after Manette's incarceration, form a kind of bridge over his years in prison. These are the "golden threads" with which Lucie weaves a better fate for her family. Cradling Manette, Lucie is like a mother and Manette her child—a metaphor for Manette's new life ahead.



Mr. Lorry and Defarge arrange for their immediate departure. Before he leaves, Manette asks to bring along his shoemaking tools. With Defarge escorting them, the group is able to get past the barricades in the street and reach a carriage. Mr. Lorry asks Dr. Manette if he wants to be recalled to life. Dr. Manette replies, "I can't say."

Dr. Manette's desire to keep his tools close at hand indicates that his emotional trauma still lies close to the surface. Dr. Manette's statement, "I can't say," indicates that he doesn't yet totally believe in the possibility that he could escape his traumatic past.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1

The year is 1780. The narrator describes Tellson's Bank in London as an old, cramped building with ancient clerks. The bank has business interests connecting England and France. Encrusted by tradition and unwilling to change, the bank seems much like England itself.

The bank is a symbol of England and France. Like the tradition-encrusted bank, each of these countries has problems with the institutions they've inherited, such as the monarchy.



In his cramped apartment in a poor London neighborhood, Jerry Cruncher yells at his wife for "praying against" him, which he insists is interfering with his work as an "honest tradesman."

Jerry's dislike of praying and insistence that it interferes with his business, implies that his work as an "honest tradesman" makes him feel guilty.



Jerry and his son then go to work—they sit outside Tellson's waiting for odd jobs from the bank. On this day, word emerges from the bank that a porter is needed. Jerry hurries inside. Jerry's young son, left alone outside, wonders why his father's boots are muddy and his fingers stained by rust.

The stains of guilt on Jerry's conscience are represented by the mud and rust from his nocturnal work, which is as of yet still unrevealed.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2

One day, Jerry Cruncher is sent to await Mr. Lorry's orders at the Old Bailey Courthouse, where a handsome young gentleman named Charles Darnay stands accused of treason. Jerry enters the court and pushes through the crowd gathered to see the trial. The spectators stare at Darnay, and one onlooker excitedly predicts that the accused will be convicted and then brutally drawn-and-quartered.

The sadistic appetites of this English crowd are similar to those of the French mob in Book 1, chapter 5. The title of the chapter, "A Sight," indicates that these people come to the trial for the fun of it, hoping not for justice but for the spectacle of violence.



Charles, who stands accused of being a French spy, is defended by two lawyers: Mr. Stryver and the insolent and bored-looking Mr. Carton. When Darnay glances at a young woman and her father sitting nearby (Lucie and Dr. Manette), word flashes through the crowd that these two are witnesses against Darnay. Nonetheless, Lucie's face radiates a compassion that awes the spectators.

The compassion in Lucie's face indicates that she does not want to condemn Charles, even though she is a witness for the prosecution. This foreshadows Charles's final trial in Paris, when Dr. Manette, contrary to his intentions, dooms Charles.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3

The Attorney General prosecuting the case demands that the jury sentence Charles to death. He calls a witness, the "unimpeachable patriot" John Barsad, whose testimony implicates Charles as a spy. However, on cross-examination Stryver reveals Barsad to be a gambler and brawler and a generally untrustworthy witness. Stryver similarly is able to raise questions about the motivations of another witness, Roger Cly, Charles's former servant.

Mr. Lorry, Lucie, and Dr. Manette are each called to testify: they had all met Charles aboard ship on their way back from Paris five years earlier. Lucie explains how Charles helped her care for her father, swaying the jury in Charles's favor. But she then accidentally turns the court against Darnay. How? First she admits that Charles was traveling with other Frenchmen and carrying lists. Second she mentions Charles's joking comment that George Washington's place in history might one day match that of England's King George III.

Later, while Mr. Stryver is unsuccessfully cross-examining a witness who has been called to identify Charles, Carton hands Stryver a note. After reading from the note, Stryver forces the court to notice the striking resemblance between Charles and Carton, shattering the witness's credibility.

The jury goes to deliberate. Carton continues to look bored, stirring only to order help when he notices Lucie start to faint. Finally, the jury returns from its deliberations with a verdict of not guilty.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4

After the trial, Charles kisses Lucie's hands in gratitude and thanks Stryver for his help. Dr. Manette is now a distinguished citizen of London. He can still become gloomy, but this occurs only occasionally because Lucie serves as a "golden thread" linking him to his life before and after his imprisonment. Stryver, Dr. Manette, and Lucie depart in a carriage.

A drunk Sydney Carton emerges from the shadows. His shabby clothes and impertinent manners offend Mr. Lorry, who departs. Carton and Charles go out to dinner at a tavern, where Carton slyly asks Charles whether being tried for his life is worth the sympathy and compassion he now gets from Lucie. Annoyed, Charles comments on Carton's drinking. In response, Carton says, "I am a disappointed drudge, sir. I care for no man on earth, and no man on earth cares for me." After Charles leaves, Carton curses his own reflection in a mirror and then curses Charles, who reminds him of what he might have been.

The prosecuting attorney foreshadows the later prosecutors in France who will bend the truth to seek an execution. Ironically, Charles is accused of spying while John Barsad and Roger Cly (who are later revealed to be actual English spies) are presented as "unimpeachable" witnesses.



Another irony: as will be revealed later, Charles's "suspicious" activities are actually his humanitarian efforts to help his impoverished tenants in France. He is putting himself in danger to help others. His comment about George Washington (who was leading the American Revolution at the time) indicates that he has revolutionary sympathies.



Besides serving an important role in the plot, the uncanny resemblance between Carton and Charles links them and sets them up as doubles to be compared and contrasted.



Carton's boredom identifies him as uninterested in the world and empty. Only Lucie seems to interest him.



Though Lucie's love and compassion, her "golden thread," have returned Dr. Manette's to life, his grip on sanity is still tenuous, only as strong as a thread of hair.



Carton's lack of manners and shabby looks show that he doesn't care much about life. His bitter comments about the compassion Charles receives from Lucie show that Carton craves Lucie's pity. His words also suggest that Carton only saved Charles because he wanted to help Lucie. Carton curses Charles because their resemblance forces Carton to consider his own life, which was ruined by some past experience.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5

The narrator describes Mr. Stryver as an ambitious man starting to climb the professional ladder. Due to his problem distilling information, he partnered with Sydney Carton, who now secretly does all the work for Stryver to win his cases. If Stryver is a lion in court, Carton is a cunning jackal behind the scenes.

After leaving the tavern where he dined with Charles, Carton joins Stryver in his apartment. To stay awake, he wraps a wet towel around his head and works through a pile of legal documents. Stryver watches.

Afterwards, Stryver and Carton drink and talk. Stryver comments on Carton's moodiness and lack of direction, which have been evident since their days at university. Carton responds that he lacks Stryver's ambition, and must live in "rust and repose." Stryver changes the subject to Lucie's beauty. Carton mocks her as a "golden-haired doll," but Stryver senses Carton's true feelings might be different.

After leaving Stryver, Carton stumbles home through the grey dawn, imagining for a moment a city of hope, full of love and grace. But it passes and he cries into his pillow, resigned to his miserable life.

As his name implies, Stryver "strives" to get ahead in the world. He is uninterested in sacrifice because he is only out for himself.



Carton willingly makes himself a slave to Stryver's legal work. He is sacrificing his potential for no reason, which is a kind of suicide.



This exchange reveals an important part of Carton's character and history. He is always working for others, never seeking the credit, as Stryver would. Carton's denials about his interest in Lucie don't even convince Stryver.



Carton's vision is of a celestial city in heaven. But in his current state of empty self-pity, he can only glimpse it for a moment.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6

Four months pass. Mr. Lorry visits Dr. Manette and Lucie at their home. Lucie has decorated the house beautifully, but Mr. Lorry notices that Manette's **shoe-making** workbench is still in the house.

Dr. Manette and Lucie are out, though. Mr. Lorry speaks with Miss Pross, who comments on and dismisses all the suitors who constantly call on Lucie. She adds that her brother, Solomon Pross, is the only man good enough for Lucie. Lorry remains silent, though he knows Solomon is a cheat and scoundrel. Mr. Lorry then asks if Dr. Manette ever uses his workbench or speaks about his imprisonment. Miss Pross responds that Dr. Manette does not think about his traumatic years of imprisonment.

The beautiful house symbolizes the Manettes' return to life, but the presence of the workbench indicates that Manette is not yet completely free of his past.



Miss Pross's comments introduce her brother, while Lorry's skepticism establishes that Solomon is not all that he seems—he's really a spy. Dr. Manette's silence about his imprisonment and insistence on keeping his shoe-making workbench show that he has not resolved his traumatic past: he's still hiding from it.



Lucie and Manette return. Charles arrives to visit moments later. Charles tells them of his recent trip to the Tower of London, where a workman recently realized that what he had thought were someone's initials carved into a wall ("D.I.G.") were actually instructions: beneath the floor, they found the ashes of a letter. Dr. Manette nearly faints at this story.

Charles's story foreshadows what will be discovered in Dr. Manette's old cell: his carved initials and a letter telling his story. Dr. Manette almost faints because he can't face his past and senses the letter's danger, whether consciously or not.



Sydney Carton also visits. Sitting out on the veranda as a storm approaches, Lucie tells him that she sometimes imagines that the echoes of the **footsteps** from the pedestrians below belong to people who will soon come into their lives. Carton says it must be a great crowd to make such a sound, and says that he will welcome these people into his life.

The storm and footsteps symbolize the oncoming French Revolution. Carton's comment is prophetic: in the end, he welcomes the Revolution into his life and sacrifices himself to the Revolution to save Lucie.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7

The scene cuts to Paris and the inner sanctum of Monseigneur, a powerful French lord. He drinks some hot chocolate with four richly dressed servants to help him. Monseigneur is surrounded by luxury, by state officials who know nothing of state business but everything about dressing well. Every aristocrat there seems disfigured by the "leprosy of unreality."

The hot chocolate exemplifies the nobility's self-indulgent and foolish focus on personal comforts. They are so out of touch with the hard realities of the common people in France that the narrator compares their disconnection to a disease.



One sinister lord with a pinched nose, the Marquis Evrémonte, leaves in a huff that the Monseigneur did not treat him a bit more warmly. He takes out his anger by having his carriage speed through the streets, scattering the commoners in the way.

The Marquis cares only about power. Feeling snubbed by the Monseigneur, he makes himself feel powerful again by taking it out on the commoners, whom he clearly cares nothing about.



The carriage runs over and kills a little boy. As a tall man wails over his dead son, the Marquis scolds the people for not taking care of their children and tosses the man a gold coin. As his carriage pulls away, the coin sails back in: Monsieur Defarge threw it back. Furious, the Marquis screams that he will "exterminate [the commoners] from the earth." He drives away while Madame Defarge looks on, **knitting**.

The boy's death is a metaphor for the brutality of tyranny. The man throwing the coin back shows how tyranny inspires revolution, creating a situation where both sides want to destroy the other. For his actions against the commoners, the Marquis gets his name knitted into Defarge's register of death.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8

Returning through the village he rules and has taxed nearly to death, Marquis Evrémonte stops to question a mender of roads who the Marquis had noticed staring at his passing carriage. The man explains that he saw someone hanging on beneath the carriage who then ran off into the fields.

The stowaway represents how the Marquis is bringing his own troubles home to roost. The trouble is spreading from the cities through the country.



The Marquis drives on, passing a shoddy graveyard. A woman approaches the carriage and petitions the Marquis for help for her husband who has recently died of hunger, like so many others. The Marquis dismissively asks the woman if she expects him to be able to restore the dead man to life or to feed everyone? The woman responds that all she wants is a simple grave marker for her husband, so he won't be forgotten. The Marquis drives away.

The Marquis fails to realize that he does have the power to feed the people. But it would require sympathizing with them or even sacrificing some of his prosperity and power. The Marquis's lack of pity contrasts with Lucie's compassion. Unlike the Marquis, she has the power to restore someone to life.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 9

At his luxurious castle, the Marquis Evrémonte waits for the arrival of his nephew, Charles Evrémonte (a.k.a. Charles Darnay) from London. Charles explains he has been questing for a "sacred object," but that he's run into trouble. The Marquis dismisses him, but complains that the power of the French aristocracy has waned. They used to hold the right of life and death, and ruled by fear and repression.

The object of Charles's sacred quest is Lucie. Charles' "trouble" in winning her love is his aristocratic background. Notice also the contrast between Lucie and the aristocracy: she has the power to restore life, while the French nobility rule through the power of taking life away.



Charles responds that the Evrémontes have lost their family honor by injuring anyone who stood between them and pleasure. He adds that when his mother died, she commanded him to have mercy on the people. He renounces his family name and property, which he says is cursed, and explains that he will work for a living in England. The Marquis scoffs at his nephew's "new philosophy," tells him to accept his "natural destiny," and goes to bed.

The "new philosophy" of the Enlightenment, which inspired both the American and French Revolutions, held that all people are born equal, that no one has a natural right to rule. Yet rather than facing his past, Charles tries to run from it by renouncing his family and living and working in England.



As the morning dawns, the expressions on the castle's stone faces seem to have changed to shock. Bells ring and villagers gather to share urgent news: the Marquis has been found dead with a knife in his chest and a note signed "Jacques."

The stone faces represent the old institution of the nobility, shocked at the unthinkable: a challenge to their power. Yet the murder also shows that despite their ideals, the revolutionaries are as bloodthirsty and revenge-driven as the nobles.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 10

A year passes. Charles now makes a passable living in London as a French teacher. Charles visits Dr. Manette. During the visit, Charles tells Dr. Manette of his deep love for Lucie. Dr. Manette at first seems frightened by the news, but relaxes when Charles promises that he intends not to separate them, but to share the Manettes' home and bind Lucie closer to her father. Dr. Manette suspects that Stryver and Carton are also interested in Lucie, but promises to vouch for Charles's love for Lucie should Lucie ever ask.

Charles has sacrificed his wealth and aristocratic heritage to try to win Lucie's love. Since only Lucie's love keeps Dr. Manette sane, any threat to their bond makes him worry. Charles understands this and promises that his relationship to Lucie won't interfere with Lucie's relationship with Manette.



Charles thanks Dr. Manette for his confidence in him, and wants to return the favor by sharing a secret of his own: his real name. But Manette suddenly stops him. He asks Charles to tell him on the morning of his wedding, not before. That night, Lucie returns and finds her father again making **shoes**.

Dr. Manette must have a hunch that Charles is an Evrémonde. By stopping Charles from revealing the truth, he continues to try to repress his pain. But he is not entirely successful, as his return to shoemaking shows.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 11

That same night, as Sydney Carton plows through heaps of legal papers, Mr. Stryver announces that he intends to get married. He chastises Carton for acting strangely around people, especially the Manettes. Stryver explains how he works to get along with people, which gets him ahead in the world.

Stryver is not an evil character, but he is selfish. All his actions are focused on getting ahead. He would never consider sacrificing any of his hard-earned success for any reason.



Because Carton had previously (though insincerely) insulted Lucie, Stryver breaks the news to him carefully: he plans to marry her. Stryver thinks she's a "charming creature" and will improve his home and professional standing; besides, she would be lucky to marry a man of such rising distinction. Carton drinks harder and says almost nothing. Stryver worries about Carton and tells him to get married, to settle down with some wealthy woman.

Stryver wants Lucie for all the wrong reasons: she'll be a trophy wife who will help him professionally. This contrasts with the feelings of profound love that both Charles and Carton feel for Lucie. Stryver thinks that Carton can find redemption on an earthly path, like getting married for money.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 12

On his way to Lucie Manette's house to propose, Mr. Stryver passes Tellson's Bank and decides to drop in on Mr. Lorry. When Stryver tells him of his plans, Mr. Lorry stiffens and advises him not to proceed. Stryver is stunned and insulted. Mr. Lorry clarifies that he knows Lucie's likely answer. But Stryver cannot believe that any girl could refuse him.

Stryver thinks the world revolves around him, that everyone must believe in the virtue of pursuing earthly rewards, at which he excels. But Mr. Lorry has a sense that Lucie has different goals and a more profound destiny.



Mr. Lorry asks Stryver to wait while he visits the Manettes to see about Stryver's chances. Stryver agrees and returns home to think it over. When Mr. Lorry arrives with the expected bad news, Stryver has already decided to drop it. He explains that Lucie shares the "vanities and giddiness of empty-headed girls" and that he's better off without her.

Stryver convinces himself he never wanted Lucie. But his insult about Lucie is so far off that it shows his foolishness. A selfish materialist like Stryver will never deserve or receive the rewards of love and restored life that Lucie can provide.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 13

Although his awkward social skills obscure it, Sydney Carton loves to visit the Manette house. After Mr. Stryver informs him that he's given up his plans to propose, Carton visits Lucie for a private conversation.

Carton's earlier insults of Lucie were just a show. From his visits, it is clear that he loves and admires her for her compassion and goodness.

Lucie is astonished when Carton breaks into tears over his wasted life during the visit. She asks if she can help him, if she can persuade him to live a better life. Carton says no, that his life was over long ago. But Lucie responds that she believes he has it in him to live a much worthier life, and that she can help him.

Carton tells Lucie he loves her, that she is "the last dream of [his] soul." But that even if she loved him back, he would probably just make her miserable. Carton asks only one thing: for Lucie to confirm that there is still something in him to pity, some shred of humanity to sympathize with. She does and Carton tells Lucie he would do anything, even give his own life, for her and the family she loves.

Carton's past is a mystery. Not unlike Dr. Manette, Carton has been imprisoned in his own depression since some trauma in his youth. Even he does not anticipate the great deeds he is capable of, but Lucie does.



Prophetic words. Carton's soul dreams of Lucie's pity, of being forgiven and welcomed by her boundless compassion. Carton sees this compassion as the most important thing in the world, and with the strength he derives from Lucie's faith, he would do anything to protect it.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 14

Outside of Tellson's Bank, Jerry Cruncher sees an approaching funeral procession. An angry crowd harasses the drivers of the hearse with shouts of "Spies!" Cruncher learns the hearse carries the body of Roger Cly, a convicted spy against the English.

Jerry follows the mob, which roughs up the drivers and takes over the procession. They drive into the country and bury Roger Cly with mock ceremony. Then they start carousing, busting up local pubs until the police intervene.

Back at home, Jerry once again complains about his wife's praying. His son, Young Jerry, asks his father about where he goes at night. Jerry tells his son that he goes fishing, as Mrs. Cruncher knows.

That night, Young Jerry sneaks out after his father, whose "fishing gear" includes a crowbar and ropes. He follows his father to the grave of Roger Cly, and watches his father start digging, then runs in terror, with visions of Cly's coffin chasing after him.

The next morning, frustrated that Cly's body had been missing, Jerry Cruncher furiously rebukes his wife for her praying and intervening in the work of an "honest tradesman." Later, Young Jerry asks his father what a "resurrection man" is and says he would like to be one when he grows up. Jerry is worried, but also a little proud.

The English crowd threatening the spies foreshadows the French mob that, in later chapters, will actually lynch its enemies in public.



The mobs' anger at the spy Roger Cly escalates into a general zest for mayhem, foreshadowing the French revolutionaries who lose sight of their ideals in their thirst for blood.



Mrs. Cruncher knows Jerry's secret, which is why she prays: she feels guilty about Jerry's secret occupation.



Jerry is a grave robber! Jerry, who "fishes" for dead bodies, represents a perversion of Jesus, who was described as a fisher of men.



Cly's missing body will play an important part in the plot in later chapters. A "resurrection man" (grave robber) perverts the idea of resurrection. Rather than bringing the dead back to life, resurrection men sell stolen body parts to doctors.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 15

One day, Monsieur Defarge enters his shop with the mender of roads and takes him to the attic with the three "Jacques." The mender of roads tells his story: he had watched a man clinging to the underside of Marquis Evrémonte's carriage, and about a year later saw soldiers escort the same man, who was accused of killing the Marquis, to prison. A petition to save the man's life was presented to the King and Queen, but to no avail. The man was hung on a gallows above the village fountain. The mender of roads explains how the corpse cast a long and frightening shadow.

Defarge sends the mender of roads outside and consults with the Jacques. Jacques Three, hungry for blood, agrees with Defarge that the Marquis's castle and the entire Evrémonte race should be exterminated. Another Jacques points to Madame Defarge's **knitting**, which lists in its stitching the names of everyone the revolutionaries mean to kill.

Several days later, Monsieur and Madame Defarge take the mender of roads to Versailles to see a procession of the King and Queen. The mender of roads, overwhelmed with excitement, shouts "Long live the King!" Defarge thanks the man for helping to keep the aristocrats unaware of the people's rage.

In presenting a petition, the commoners are working within the established political structure: accepting the nobles as rulers and making an appeal to their mercy. But the nobles squander their chance to show mercy, and hang the murderer as a warning. The effect is the opposite: the dead man's shadow represents the commoner's desire for revenge and revolution. By showing no mercy the nobles give up any chance of receiving any mercy.



Just as the Marquis would exterminate the people, those people would exterminate him. In other words, the revolutionaries are just as blood-minded as the corrupt and brutal aristocracy they seek to overthrow.



The mender of roads exemplifies the fickle mob, who crave spectacle above all else. One minute he's working for the Revolution, the next he's overcome with joy at seeing the king. The Defarges exploit people like him.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 16

When the Defarges return home that evening, they receive information that an Englishman named John Barsad has been sent to spy on them. Madame Defarge promises to add his name to her **knitting**. Defarge admits to his wife that he's tired and doubts the Revolution will come during their lives. Madame Defarge counters that the Revolution is like an earthquake: it builds slowly, but when it comes it releases catastrophic damage. She says she is content to wait, and will act when necessary.

John Barsad enters the shop the next day. In conversation with the Defarges, Barsad comments on the plight of the people, trying to get the Defarges to reveal their revolutionary sympathies. Wise to his scheme, the Defarges reveal nothing.

Barsad changes tactics. Knowing that Defarge was once Dr. Manette's servant, he mentions that Lucie is now married to Charles Darnay—who is in reality the nephew of the Marquis Evrémonte. After watching the impact of this news, Barsad leaves.

For all his revolutionary zeal, Monsieur Defarge also has some sympathetic human attributes. Madame Defarge, on the other hand, is tireless and merciless. Her comment suggests just what the Revolution will be like when it comes: not a controlled political action with rational goals defined by political ideals, but a vengeful riot.



John Barsad the spy has already been spied upon. Suspicion and surveillance are in full swing.



Because Charles and Lucie bring together opposite sides of the French political divide—nobility and daughter of a revolutionary hero—their marriage provokes anger on both sides.



Defarge is in disbelief. He feels a deep anxiety when Madame Defarge adds Charles's name to her knitting.

To Defarge, human connections still mean something. To Madame Defarge, all aristocrats must die, no matter what.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 17

Lucie spends the last night before her wedding to Charles with her father. She asks Dr. Manette if he believes that her marriage will bring them closer. Dr. Manette assures her that he wants to see her fulfilled, and couldn't live with himself otherwise.

Dr. Manette clings to Lucie for his emotional security. But he does the noble thing and risks his mental health in order to ensure her happiness.



For the first time, Dr. Manette talks to Lucie about his imprisonment in the Bastille. He tells her that while there, he passed the time by imagining how his unborn daughter would grow up. Would she know nothing about him, or think about her lost father and weave his memory into the family of her own?

Manette's thoughts about living on in his daughter's memory after death hint at Carton's reward for his sacrifice at the end of the novel: a legacy carried on by Lucie's future family.



Late that night, Lucie sneaks downstairs to check on her sleeping father. Dr. Manette's face is deeply worn from his trials, but he is peacefully asleep.

Manette's peaceful face is "imprisoned" in a worn body, hinting that he won't be able to escape his past quite so easily.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 18

On the day of the wedding, Charles Darnay and Dr. Manette speak privately. When they emerge, Mr. Lorry notices that Manette looks deathly pale, though he had looked perfectly normal before the meeting.

Charles has just revealed his secret to Dr. Manette: he is an Evrémonte. Somehow this means something to Manette.



After the wedding, Charles and Lucie leave for their honeymoon in Wales. The plan is for Dr. Manette to join the newlyweds after nine days. But after Lucie leaves, Mr. Lorry notices that Dr. Manette seems absent-minded. By that evening, Manette is lost and incoherent, making **shoes** again in his room. Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross keep an anxious watch over him, and decide not to tell Lucie in hopes that Dr. Manette will improve. He doesn't improve for nine days.

The discovery that Lucie has married an Evrémonte pushes Manette back into his old shoe-making mania. These events link the Evrémontes to Manette's years in prison, though just what role the Evrémontes played in Manette's imprisonment remains unclear.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 19

On the tenth day, Mr. Lorry wakes to find Dr. Manette reading as if nothing has happened. Discovering that Dr. Manette has no memory of the past nine days, Mr. Lorry carefully tries to figure out what caused the relapse by asking Dr. Manette's opinion about the medical case of a "friend" who's daughter Mr. Lorry cares about. Nonetheless, Manette quickly seems to suspect what's going on.

Ever a model of discretion, Mr. Lorry avoids mentioning anything that happened directly. Dr. Manette is still hiding from his past, even when discussing it.



Mr. Lorry very discreetly describes Dr. Manette's situation, never using Manette's name. He asks what might have caused the relapse and how he might help to prevent another one. Dr. Manette replies that it would be far too painful for the "patient" to tell anyone his secrets, but surmises that something must have recently reminded the patient of his past trauma. He then assures Mr. Lorry that the worst should be over, and that only something extraordinary could upset the patient's mind again.

Mr. Lorry then explains that this "friend" has a hobby, "blacksmith work," that may be associated with the trauma. He wonders if the blacksmith tools should be removed. Looking worried, Dr. Manette answers that if manual labor helped the man get through the trauma, he should be allowed to keep the tools. Eventually Dr. Manette agrees that the tools should be removed, but only if these tools are removed while the patient is elsewhere at the time.

That night, after Manette has left to join Lucie and Charles, Mr. Lorry and Miss Pross remove the shoemaker's tools and destroy the bench. Feeling as guilty as murderers, they burn or bury everything.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 20

The first person to visit Lucie and Charles after they return from their honeymoon is Sydney Carton. Carton apologizes for his drunkenness during past encounters, and asks for Charles' friendship. Carton declares himself a worthless man, but says he has a favor to ask: would Charles mind if he occasionally visited his house? Of course not, Charles replies.

At dinner that night, Charles comments to Lucie, Manette, Mr. Lorry, and Miss Pross about Carton's careless and reckless behavior. Later that night in their room, Lucie suggests that Charles was too judgmental toward Carton. She asks Charles to have faith in Carton, who she believes has a wounded heart but is nevertheless capable of doing tremendous good. Charles blesses Lucie for her compassion and promises to have more sympathy for Carton.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 21

Years pass. Lucie weaves her "**golden thread**" of positive influence through the family. She often sits by the parlor window and ponders the echoing **footsteps** rising from the street below. She gives birth to a daughter, Lucie, who particularly likes Sydney Carton. Her second child, a son, dies in childhood.

Dr. Manette represses his traumas, which remain hidden until they violently erupt. This is a metaphor for the French Revolution itself—the nobles suppressed the commoners until a revolt erupted. Dr. Manette now knows the truth about Charles's past, but doesn't entirely remember his own.



Dr. Manette needs these tools like a child needs a security blanket. His inability to face losing the tools, or even to be present when they are taken away, is another example of Manette's persistent avoidance of his traumatic past, whether conscious or not. But he is still willing to sacrifice the tools.



Notice how the burying of Dr. Manette's work bench parallels and contrasts with Jerry's digging up of dead bodies.



The novel foreshadows that Carton, as the first to meet the married couple, will be especially important to Charles and Lucie's life as a family. For his part, Charles is just being polite, humoring Carton out of his sense of obligation to him.



Unlike Charles, Lucie has a deep sympathy and compassion for Carton's pitiful soul. Even though she hardly understands his behavior, Lucie has faith. Her prediction about Carton foreshadows the incredible sacrifice that Carton will make for the Manette family.



As the political situation starts to unravel in France, Lucie weaves her domestic community more tightly together in London. Her daughter, like her, has an innocent belief that Carton is a good man.



In the year 1789, distressing "echoes" arrive from France. Mr. Lorry confides in Charles that the Paris office of Tellson's Bank has been flooded with anxious aristocrats trying to save their property.

Charles sacrificed his property to try to escape his family's past. Aristocrats who hung on to their wealth have now lost it.



The scene cuts to Defarge's wine shop, now the center of a revolutionary maelstrom. The streets are thronged with dingy, angry people, armed with guns, knives, or any weapon they can get their hands on.

The dirty angry revolutionaries show that the Revolution will be more about revenge than Enlightenment ideals.



Defarge leads this army to the Bastille. Madame Defarge rallies the women, swearing they can kill as well as the men. After fierce fighting, the Bastille surrenders and the people swarm inside to free the prisoners. Defarge and Jacques Three demand that an older officer show them "One hundred and five, North Tower." There, they find Dr. Alexandre Manette's initials "A.M." and search the room.

The taking of the Bastille was one of the major early events of the French Revolution. It's anniversary is still celebrated as the French Independence Day. Note Madame Defarge's bloodthirstiness. Manette's initials on the wall recall Charles's story about the Tower of London.



Returning to the Bastille courtyard, the crowd swarms the old officer and stabs him to death. Madame Defarge takes her long knife and slices off his head. Seven prisoners are freed. Seven prison guards are killed and their heads are stuck on pikes.

The exchange of the seven prisoners with seven guards suggests that power may have switched sides, but that nothing has really changed. Madame Defarge's beheading of the guard foreshadows the guillotine.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 22

Madame Defarge, now the leader of the female revolutionaries, sits in the **wine** shop with her second-in-command, a stocky woman whose violent acts have earned her the name The Vengeance. No spies dare come into this neighborhood anymore.

If Madame Defarge represents Fate, her assistant reveals exactly Owhat kind of Fate is in store: angry and violent vengeance in response to years of tyranny and oppression.



Monsieur Defarge returns with news that an old aristocrat, who once said that starving people should just eat grass, tried to fake his own death but has now been caught. Anger swells—a revolutionary mob rushes from the neighborhood to the courts building. The mob overwhelms the officials, captures the old aristocrat, then drags, beats, and stuffs his mouth with straw. Finally, they hang him from a lamppost.

The story of the murdered aristocrat alludes to the famous story of Queen Marie Antoinette who, when told that the starving people had no bread, replied "Let them eat cake." The statement exemplifies cruel snobbery, but the response is out of proportion to the offense.



Afterwards, the commoners return home, eat their "scanty suppers," play with their kids, and make love. Back at the shop, Defarge tells his wife that he is happy the Revolution has finally come. "Almost," Madame Defarge replies.

The scenes of the commoners at home highlights that the vicious mob is made up of ordinary people. Madame Defarge's comment shows her insatiable appetite for revenge.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 23

While at work in the ruined countryside of France, the mender of roads encounters a shaggy but powerful man. Addressing each other as "Jacques," they confirm that something will happen "tonight."

"Jacques" keeps cropping up everywhere, suggesting how the revolutionary cause is taken up again and again by new people.



In the dark courtyard of the castle of Marquis Evrémonde, four torch-bearing figures appear. Soon, fire rages through the castle—its stone faces look tormented and are lost in flame. The inferno becomes a pillar of fire surging high into the sky.

The stone faces symbolize the ancient French nobility, which gets decimated by the Revolution. The burning castle is a symbol of the failing aristocracy and the commoners' revenge.



A man from the castle rushes into the village screaming for help to put out the fire and salvage the valuables in the castle. The crowd of villagers refuses to budge.

Now the nobility is asking the people for help, when for so long they refused to listen to the people's appeals for aid.



Later, the villagers surround the house of Monsieur Gabelle, the government "functionary" in charge of the area. He is forced to hide on his roof, but is able to come down in the morning. The narrator explains that other functionaries in other areas aren't so lucky, and that fires are burning all over France.

Though Gabelle is not an aristocrat himself, he works for the government. His association with the aristocrats is enough for the revolutionaries to distrust and want to harm him.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 24

It's now 1792. In the three years that have passed, there have been battles and bloodshed. The French nobility has scattered. Many French aristocrats have become emigrants, fleeing France for London where they gather at Tellson's Bank for news.

Though both London and Paris teetered on the edge of revolt at the beginning of the novel, only France has fallen into revolution.



Inside the bank, Charles is trying to talk Mr. Lorry out of his latest mission: going to the Paris branch of the bank to protect whatever bank documents he can. The aged Mr. Lorry is apparently the youngest clerk at the bank, and he plans to take Jerry Cruncher for protection. He will leave that night.

Charles may have democratic sympathies, but Tellson's Bank is invested in old money and aims to preserve it. This makes Mr. Lorry's political and moral positions in the book ambiguous.



Just then, Mr. Lorry is given a letter addressed to the "Marquis St. Evrémonde." Not knowing such a person, he asks the assembled French nobles. They declare the man a coward who betrayed his noble family. Though insulted, Charles does not respond. Instead, he tells Mr. Lorry that he is an acquaintance of the Marquis and will deliver the letter.

Although the nobles are wrong about him, Charles has not demonstrated to France what kind of man he is. Because he ran from his past rather than confronting it, the nobles and the commoners despise him.



The letter is from Gabelle. He was arrested, brought to Paris, and charged with treason for helping an emigrant, Charles Evrémonte. Gabelle writes that the peasants neither know nor care that he in fact was trying to help them, working on Charles's orders. He begs Charles to come save his life.

Gabelle was trying to help the commoners on Charles's behalf. But the revolutionaries no longer care about the truth. They just want to kill aristocrats. Charles now gets an opportunity to restore Gabelle to life.



Charles realizes that he must go to Paris. His sense of justice obliges him to help Gabelle. He also thinks he can do something to stop the Revolution's terrible violence and urge the people toward mercy. The narrator describes Charles as being drawn to Paris as to a Loadstone Rock (a naturally magnetic rock).

Charles wrongly thinks one man can influence history, or sway the mob. In fact, the reference to the magnetic "loadstone" suggests that even the choice to return is not really Charles's own, that his past has fated him to go back.



Charles gives Mr. Lorry a reply to send to Gabelle: Evrémonte will come. Charles packs secretly, writes a letter each to Lucie and Dr. Manette, and without telling them leaves for France the following night.

Charles thinks he can do this on his own, not realizing that he will also magnetically pull Lucie and Dr. Manette back to Paris as well.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 1

Charles arrives in France and finds things very different from when he left. At each village and checkpoint, he is subjected to the sneering of revolutionaries dedicated to what the narrator calls the new republic of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death." Charles feels each gate close behind him like a prison door.

Themes of imprisonment and fate merge as Charles is gradually locked into his journey to Paris. The narrator's addition of the words "or death" to the motto of the Revolution shows its ideals have been perverted.



Three soldiers accompany Charles to Paris as his "escort." Upon arriving in Paris, they deliver Charles—whom they now call their "prisoner"—to Monsieur Defarge. Charles demands to know under what charges he is held, and is told that new laws against emigrants have been passed. Defarge quietly asks him why he ever returned to France in this, the age of "La **Guillotine**." Charles asks Defarge to help him. Defarge refuses.

As he gets closer to Paris, Charles goes from free man to escorted suspect to prisoner, though he has done nothing. Defarge refuses to help Charles, but he shows some sympathy. The revolutionaries invoke the guillotine as if it's a saint: bloodthirsty violence has replaced religious compassion.



Defarge conducts Charles to the prison of La Force with a note for the jailor saying "In secret." The jail is full to bursting with aristocrats who welcome Charles with incredible politeness and sympathize with his fate. Charles is jailed in a solitary cell in a tower. He realizes he has been virtually left for dead. Charles paces off the dimensions of the room again and again: "five paces by four and a half."

Defarge helped free Dr. Manette from his secret imprisonment, but now Defarge secretly jails Manette's son-in-law. The Revolution has become a tyranny. Charles paces to deal with the isolation of imprisonment, just as Dr. Manette turned to making shoes.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 2

Mr. Lorry arrives at the Paris branch of Tellson's Bank. It sits next to the former house of a grand French noble that has been converted into an armory for the revolutionaries. In the courtyard there's a large grindstone.

Mr. Lorry is stunned when Lucie and Dr. Manette rush in. They left London immediately after reading Charles's letters. Dr. Manette's fame as a Bastille prisoner has granted him access and information, and he has learned that Charles has been imprisoned at La Force.

Noises outside draw them to the window. Half-naked men covered in blood are turning the grindstone to sharpen swords. Frenzied, blood-smearing women pour **wine** into the men's mouths. The mob runs howling into the streets with their weapons.

Mr. Lorry whispers to Dr. Manette that the mob has gone to kill the prisoners at La Force. Horrified, Manette runs out to the mob. Manette and the remaining revolutionaries rush to La Force as the mob cries out, "Help for the Bastille prisoner's kindred in La Force!"

The house's transformation symbolizes the Revolution: formerly representing the excesses of the nobility, now the house represents the revenge that excess inspired.



In his return to Paris, Dr. Manette represents redemption through suffering. He's been restored to his former life, and suffering has earned him political power within the Revolution.



The revolutionaries are described as uncivilized savages, engaged in some terrible ritual. Note the wine-blood connection and the intoxication of violence.



It is not enough for the revolutionaries to imprison their enemies. They must kill them. Manette, though, uses the political power he gained from his sacrifice to save Charles.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 3

Feeling it necessary to separate Tellson's Bank from his own personal business, Mr. Lorry finds an apartment for Lucie and her family, and leaves Jerry Cruncher with them to act as guard. On the way back to Tellson's Mr. Lorry is stopped by Monsieur Defarge, who brings news that Charles is safe, a note for Lucie from Dr. Manette, and instructions for Lorry to let Defarge in to see Lucie.

On their way to the apartment, Mr. Lorry and Defarge are joined by Madame Defarge, who is **knitting**, and The Vengeance. Defarge tells Lorry that, in order to be able to protect Lucie, Madame Defarge must see and remember Lucie's face.

Mr. Lorry keeps his two worlds as separate as possible, but is deeply committed to both. It is unclear if Defarge has tampered with this letter, but certainly at this moment he is acting as a secret agent for the Revolution.



That Madame Defarge is knitting shows that she's planning to add Lucie's name to her list of victims. "Safety" and "security" are words the power-hungry use to mask their real intentions.



In the apartment, Lucie reads the note from Charles: he is fine, and under Dr. Manette's protection. She gratefully kisses one of Madame Defarge's hands, but Madame Defarge coldly withdraws to her **knitting**. Lucie pleads for Madame Defarge to help Charles, to use her influence as a "sister-woman." Madame responds that she has seen so many women suffering for imprisoned husbands that Lucie's predicament doesn't mean much. After they leave, Lucie tells Mr. Lorry that Madame Defarge seems to throw a shadow over all her hopes.

This crucial meeting between the two key female characters reveals a lot about each: Lucie has compassion even for this terrible woman and asks for her pity; Madame Defarge shows she is no "sister-woman" but is a cold messenger of death. Madame Defarge is meant to be a frightening perversion of femininity, while Lucie, with her goodness and compassion, is the model of it.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 4

After four days, Dr. Manette returns. He tells Lorry that 1100 defenseless prisoners have been murdered, convicted by a self-appointed Tribunal. The Tribunal also nearly condemned Charles to death, but Dr. Manette was able to sway the crowd and Charles was returned to his cell.

Although Charles's trial in England was unfair, the French Tribunal is depicted as even more monstrous, a total sham of justice. Dr. Manette seems to have brought Charles back to life.



Dr. Manette has been invigorated by his newfound authority. He believes his suffering has become strength and power, capable of breaking Charles out of prison. Having earned the respect of the revolutionaries, he has been made the inspecting physician of a number of prisons, including La Force. In this new role, he can protect Charles. However, as time passes, he cannot seem to get Charles freed.

The novel implies that through suffering comes redemption, and that faith can empower people to break the pull of fate of history. Yet even Dr. Manette's political power is not enough to free Charles.



A year goes by. The Revolution gains in force. The King and Queen of France are beheaded. As the revolutionaries grow stronger, their courts zealously prosecute people, guilty or not. Suspicion reigns. Civil freedoms disappear.

After the Republic was declared in France in 1792, the "Reign of Terror" began: a period of spying, fear, and escalating numbers of executions.



The **guillotine** becomes an institution, and guillotines can now be found in the streets all over Paris. The narrator says that in Paris the guillotine has come to replace the Cross as an idol for worship.

The guillotine, a tool to make it easier to execute people by beheading, has become a sacrilegious idol in place of Christ. This signals that compassion, in France, is dead.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 5

Through it all, Lucie tries to keep a normal English household to relieve her mind. Dr. Manette reassures her that he can save Charles. He suggests that she walk near the prison at a place where Charles might see her from the window of his cell in order to boost Charles's spirits. Lucie does just that, everyday, rain, shine, or snow.

Lucie fits the classic Victorian stereotype of female strength through domesticity ("the angel in the house") and selfless dedication to her husband. Just as Dr. Manette will unwittingly doom Charles later, he dooms Lucie with his advice here.



As Lucie stands at her spot on the street each day, a wood-sawyer—formerly a mender of roads—who works nearby always says hello. As he cuts his wood, the wood-sawyer jokes that he is guillotining a little family. Though the wood-sawyer unnerves her, Lucie is always polite and friendly to him.

One snowy day, as Lucie stands outside the prison, she sees a crowd of people dancing to a popular revolutionary song. Lucie is horrified by their savage movements and screams.

Moments later, Dr. Manette appears. He tells Lucie that Charles's trial will be held tomorrow, and promises her that all will work out well. Lucie kisses her hand in farewell to Charles as she departs, just as Madame Defarge comes around the corner. Manette and Madame Defarge salute each other.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 6

A rowdy, bloodthirsty crowd gathers for the trial of "Charles Evrémonde, called Darnay." Defarge and Madame Defarge sit in the front row. Madame Defarge is **knitting** away. Charles is sentenced to death as an emigrant, despite the fact that the law was passed *after* his imprisonment. The crowd screams to cut off his head.

In his testimony, Charles explains that he actually isn't an emigrant: he gave up his aristocratic title and property, then worked as a French tutor and married a French woman: Lucie Manette. He says that he returned to France to save the life of a citizen of the Republic: Gabelle.

Gabelle, who had been forgotten in prison before the trial, takes the witness stand and confirms Charles's story. Then Dr. Manette testifies, praising Charles's character and republican ideals.

The jury votes to acquit Charles. The boisterous crowd now celebrates Charles as a patriot and carries him through the streets in celebration.

When she sees Charles, Lucie faints with joy. In their apartment, she thanks God, then her father, who declares, "I have saved him."

The mender of roads has transformed into a man drunk on the violence of the Revolution. His sawing represents the potential executions of Charles, Lucie, and their daughter.



Another intense depiction of revolutionaries as crazed savages who worship the violence of the Revolution.



For Lucie, her kiss is a gesture of love toward her husband. For Madame Defarge, it's a crime of commiserating with an enemy of the state. But Defarge is not yet ready to make her play against Dr. Manette.



This is a court not of justice but of unchecked political passions. Charles's sentence is, in fact, a travesty of justice—the law shouldn't even apply to him. The crowd does not care about justice, though. It just wants the spectacle of his execution.



Charles finally explains who he is to the French people. By swearing that he is still a Frenchman, Charles offers himself as a positive, non-violent role model for change.



Gabelle was left for dead. Imprisonment is like the grave. Dr. Manette once again tries to use political tactics to free Charles.



Charles goes from death row to a public parade, floating on the fickle allegiance of the mob.



Dr. Manette's political influence seems to be enough to save Charles after all.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 7

The next day, Manette remains confident and proud at having saved Charles, but Lucie continues to fear for her husband's safety because so many other innocent people have been imprisoned and killed. For safety's sake, they keep no outside servants, using only Jerry and Miss Pross. Miss Pross vehemently and regularly voices her distaste for the French.

That afternoon, as Miss Pross and Jerry are out on errands, Lucie hears footsteps on the stairs outside the apartment. Then there is a knock at the door. Four armed revolutionaries enter and declare that Charles Evrémonte is again the prisoner of the Republic.

Dr. Manette tries to intervene, but the soldiers tell him that he must make sacrifices if the Revolution demands it. Still, out of respect for Manette, the men explain that evidence for the charge comes from three people: Monsieur and Madame Defarge, and one other, whom they refuse to name.

Lucie's worries counter Dr. Manette's confidence in his political power. As Lucie suspects, everyone in France succumbs to the Reign of Terror. Miss Pross embodies the inherent English distrust of the French.



In the revolutionary Republic, laws can change in an instant as the new people in power begin to abuse it. The footsteps in the hall echo the footsteps Lucie used to hear in England.



The Revolution demands that the revolutionaries be willing to sacrifice the lives of others, even family members, without question. Manette's political power can't stand up to the pull of fate and history or to the Revolution's all-consuming desire for blood.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 8

While they're out on their errands, Miss Pross screams when she recognizes her brother, Solomon Pross, disguised as a French republican. Solomon tells her to be quiet, or else she'll get him killed. Jerry, meanwhile, also thinks he recognizes this man, but can't quite remember his name.

Sydney Carton, appearing out of nowhere, tells Jerry the name he is trying to remember: John Barsad. Having arrived in Paris a day earlier, Carton explains, Carton chanced upon and recognized Barsad from Charles Darnay's English trial. Carton also learned that Barsad was serving as a French government spy working in the prisons.

Carton and Jerry escort John Barsad to Tellson's Bank, where Mr. Lorry also recognizes him. Carton says he has a plan to help Charles. He then blackmails Barsad, threatening to reveal him as a spy of the French government *and* as a former English spy, both of which would enrage the revolutionaries. Carton then reveals that he has seen Barsad associating with another known English spy: Roger Cly.

As an unthinking English patriot, Miss Pross has never questioned her brother's integrity, but as this chapter will show, he's a traitorous opportunist in an ugly political world.



Dickens's novels are often filled with extreme coincidences, such as Carton and Barsad's sudden appearances. Though one can guess that Carton came to Paris out of concern for Lucie.



Because Carton has nothing to lose, he can play the dangerous game of counter-intelligence. Carton wants to save Charles in part for Charles's sake, but to a larger extent because of his feelings for Lucie. Recall his promise to Lucie at the end of Book 2, Chapter 13.



Barsad grins: Cly is dead, he says. He then takes out a certificate of burial and says he buried Cly himself. To everyone's surprise, Jerry angrily objects that Barsad had placed "shameful impositions upon tradesmen," and then reveals that Cly's body wasn't in his coffin. Barsad realizes he's caught and agrees to help. Carton takes him into an adjoining room to talk.

Jerry's secret job as a "resurrection man" saves the day! But note that it takes being caught in a lie to get Barsad to help Charles. There is no honor among spies. And Barsad has no concept of sacrificing himself to a higher cause.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 9

After a while, Barsad leaves and Carton explains to Mr. Lorry that if Charles is convicted, Barsad will smuggle Carton into Charles's cell. Refusing to explain anything more, Carton asks that Lucie be told nothing about the plan. He then asks if Mr. Lorry is satisfied with his long life. Mr. Lorry replies that, nearing the end, he feels closer again to his life's beginning. Carton says he knows the feeling. Mr. Lorry gains a new respect for Carton.

Carton's exchange with Lorry suggests that Carton plans to sacrifice himself and expects to die. As always, he works for other people without taking credit, but this time he works for a greater cause. Mr. Lorry's sense of returning to the beginning takes on a religious tone with Carton: he will be reborn in heaven.



Carton visits a pharmacy and buys a mysterious packet of drugs that the chemist warns are very potent. All night, Carton wanders the streets of Paris. As he walks, he remembers a prayer the priest spoke at his father's funeral: "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

The prayer Carton remembers comes from the story of Jesus and Lazarus, whom Jesus resurrects in the Bible (John 11:25). The line says that Jesus will resurrect and give eternal life not only to Lazarus, but to anyone who believes in him.



As he continues to walk, he encounters a young girl, whom he helps across the street. She kisses him, and once more Carton remembers the prayer.

Carton is showing compassion to others, and receiving blessings (the kiss) in return.



Carton arrives at the courthouse the next morning for Charles's trial, where Jacques Three is the head of the jury. As the trial begins, the prosecutor announces who brought the charges: Defarge, Madame Defarge, and Dr. Alexandre Manette.

Like the wood-sawyer, Jacques Three enjoys political executions. As in Charles's first trial, Manette is again forced by fate and history to serve as a witness for the prosecution.



The court erupts in chaos. Manette objects that he never denounced Charles. The judge silences him. Defarge then takes the stand and explains how, during the storming of the Bastille, he searched Manette's old cell and found a letter hidden in the chimney. The judge asks that it be read aloud.

Manette's hidden letter recalls Charles's story about the Tower of London. It represents all the trauma and revenge that Dr. Manette has repressed, consciously or unconsciously.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 10

Defarge explains that Dr. Manette wrote the letter while in the Bastille to explain how he ended up in prison. He then reads the letter. Walking home one night in 1757, Dr. Manette was taken into a carriage by two men, identical twins. From their coat of arms, he learned that they were Evrémondes: Charles's father (who was then the Marquis) and his uncle (who became the Marquis after Charles's father died, and was murdered in Book 2, Chapter 9).

The men took the doctor to see two patients: one, a beautiful young woman deliriously calling out for her family, and the other, a peasant boy with a stab wound in his chest. As Manette treated the boy, the boy told him that the young woman was his sister. After she married, the two aristocrats decided they wanted her for themselves. So they forced her husband to endure impossibly hard work until he died. Then they took her away and raped her.

The peasant boy and young woman's father died upon hearing the news. The boy then sent his younger sister to a distant, secret place, and, seeking revenge, snuck into the Evrémondes' castle. He confronted one of the Evrémondes, who stabbed him. The boy soon died, but before he did he cursed the Evrémondes by marking the air with a cross of his own blood. The young woman died within a week. The nobles then offered Dr. Manette some gold in return for his silence, but he declined and returned home, disgusted with all he had seen.

The next day, the wife of the Marquis (and Charles's mother) visited Dr. Manette. Hearing what had happened, she hoped to find and help the surviving sister of the abused peasant family. She told her little boy Charles that he must someday repay this injured girl. Unfortunately, Manette didn't know where the girl was.

Dr. Manette soon sent a letter to the authorities detailing the crimes of the Evrémonde brothers. But the Marquis intercepted and burned Manette's letter. He then sent Manette in secret to the Bastille. Manette ends his letter from prison with a curse on the Evrémondes.

Incensed at the actions of the Evrémondes, the jury sentences Charles to death. The crowd goes wild.

The letter tells the story of Manette's imprisonment. The twin Evrémonde brothers epitomize the selfishness and cruelty of aristocratic power. They take what they want, when they want, by whatever means necessary.



The Evrémondes don't recognize the individual rights of peasants, the sovereignty of marriage, or the sacredness of female sexuality, which was a huge deal in Dickens's time. They are the worst example of aristocratic tyranny, and, as such, they embody many of the reasons the commoners revolted.



The curse seals the fate of the Evrémonde brothers. While Charles did not know this story, he sensed his family's dark past when he renounced it in Book 2, Chapter 9. Dr. Manette refused to be bought off by the Evrémondes, despite the danger of such an action. He sacrificed his freedom to preserve his integrity.



That surviving sister, as future events in the novel will show, is Madame Defarge. Ironically, Charles has pledged himself to help this girl, while she blindly seeks revenge and does everything in her power to kill him.



Manette tried to condemn the Evrémondes officially and failed—just as he does now, having tried to use his political influence to save Charles. Both governments are corrupt. His curse seals Charles's fate.



Just days before the crowd cheered Charles as a patriot.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 11

As the crowd celebrates Charles's conviction in the streets, John Barsad, who is escorting Charles back to his cell, lets Lucie embrace her husband for the last time. Charles says farewell and asks her to kiss their daughter. Lucie tells him she feels that they will not be long separated and will meet in heaven.

Devastated, Dr. Manette tries to apologize to Charles. But Charles stops him, and instead thanks him, acknowledging all that Dr. Manette must have suffered to offer his own daughter back into the Evrémonte family he justifiably hates.

Lucie faints. Carton carries her to a carriage and escorts her home. There, he instructs Dr. Manette to use any remaining influence to try to save Charles. Dr. Manette hurries away. However, once he's gone, Carton and Mr. Lorry confess they have no hope.

Lucie's daughter begs Carton to help. Carton embraces her and, before he leaves, kisses the unconscious Lucie and whispers, "A life you love."

Lucie has some kind of serene connection to the next world. If their love isn't possible in the world, it will be renewed in heaven. Note how well positioned Barsad is to smuggle Carton into Charles's cell.



Like Dr. Manette, Charles also had a horrific secret past, of which he was unaware, come back to haunt him. He cannot escape the curse on his family.



Carton is just distracting Dr. Manette; he knows that politics are no longer of any use. Something stronger is necessary to break the grip of fate, history, and the Revolution.



As his farewell implies, Carton's goal is to give Lucie and her family a happy life. He is willing to sacrifice himself for that.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 12

Sydney Carton decides to make sure he is seen around Paris. He eventually wanders into a wine shop—Defarge's wine shop. Defarge and Madame Defarge marvel at his physical resemblance to Charles, but have no idea who he is.

Carton eavesdrops on a conversation between Defarge, Madame Defarge, The Vengeance, and Jacques Three, in which Madame Defarge plots to exterminate the Evrémonte line—including Lucie and Lucie's daughter. She says that she and the wood-sawyer will testify against Lucie for sympathizing with a prisoner. Jacques Three promises a conviction. Monsieur Defarge, however, hesitates, and suggests that poor Dr. Manette has suffered enough.

Madame Defarge responds by revealing her history with the Evrémontes: *she* is the missing sister of the peasant family whom the Evrémonte brothers abused and killed. She vows to carry out her brother's dying curse. She barks at Defarge that he can tell wind and fire where to stop, "but don't tell me." Jacques Three and The Vengeance are thrilled.

Carton wants to make sure that it is known that there is someone who looks just like Darnay walking free on the streets of Paris.



The bloodthirsty juries of the Revolution need only the slightest suspicion to convict someone. Jacques Three's promise indicates that there is no justice, and that the trials are shams. Monsieur Defarge's pity for Manette makes Madame Defarge's utter mercilessness stand out even more starkly.



Madame Defarge exceeds the forces of nature. She is the terrifying product of tyrannous cruelty. She symbolizes all of the people abused by the aristocrats, and her vengeance is the embodiment of the Revolution.



Carton hurries home. Soon, Dr. Manette returns too, begging for his shoemaker's bench. Shocked, Carton and Mr. Lorry realize that Dr. Manette has lost his mind. Carton instructs Mr. Lorry to gather everyone's passports, including Carton's, and leave the next day before Madame Defarge's accusations make it impossible for them to leave France. Then Carton says farewell, blesses Lucie, and leaves.

A key tipping point: the curse against Charles cannot be stopped, and Dr. Manette's insanity is now permanent. After failing to save Charles, Manette reverts to his own fate as a traumatized prisoner. Carton takes control of things, setting up his final plan.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 13

In the prison, 52 people, including Charles, await execution that day. Charles writes a final letter to Lucie, in which he says that he did not know about her father's history and that he believes Dr. Manette was unaware of his damning letter. Charles writes much the same to Dr. Manette. He also writes to Mr. Lorry, but never thinks to write to Carton.

Neither Charles nor Dr. Manette were aware of their real legacies. They don't control their own destinies. Charles has underestimated Carton before. The fact that Carton is under no obligation to make his sacrifice only increases its symbolic power.



Suddenly John Barsad opens the cell door and lets in Carton. Carton tells Charles to start changing clothes with him. Then Carton dictates a letter for Charles to write, in which he asks "someone" to remember him and is grateful to have the chance to prove himself.

In Book 2, Chapter 4 Carton envied Charles. Now he becomes Charles by literally sacrificing his identity to save Charles's life. The "someone" in the letter is Lucie.



As Charles writes, Carton waves the packet of drugs under his nose. Charles passes out. Carton finishes swapping their clothes and Barsad carries Charles, now disguised as Sydney Carton, back to Mr. Lorry.

Charles has been helpless to stop history, and is not just passive, but actually unconscious, during his escape.



Soon the guards arrive and take Carton, whom they think is Charles Evrémonte, out to join the other condemned prisoners. A young woman, who was wrongly accused and convicted, asks him if she can hold his hand. Suddenly, the woman realizes that he is not Evrémonte. "Are you dying for him?" she asks. "And his wife and child," Carton replies. Carton promises to hold the woman's hand until the end.

The young girl reveals how corrupt and merciless the republic's tribunals are. Her innocence also lets her recognize Carton for who he is: a figure of Christ, giving his life to save others. Holding Carton's hand suggests how the girl's faith will sustain her.



At the Paris barricade, guards check the papers of the passengers in a carriage: Mr. Lorry, Dr. Manette, Lucie, and "Sydney Carton," who is unconscious. They wave the carriage through.

Just as Mr. Lorry smuggled the infant Lucie out of Paris, he now transports these mostly helpless passengers to safety.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 14

At the shop of the wood-sawyer, Madame Defarge holds a secret conference with Jacques Three and The Vengeance. Madame says that she no longer trusts Monsieur Defarge, and that they must exterminate the Evrémondes themselves. Jacques Three swears that his jury will condemn Lucie, and fantasizes about the blond hair and blue eyes of Lucie's beheaded child at the **guillotine**. The wood-sawyer and Madame Defarge promise to testify against Lucie.

Madame Defarge strides through the streets like a tigress, a woman without pity, armed with a knife and loaded pistol. She heads to Lucie's apartment, hoping to strengthen her case by catching Lucie insulting the Revolution in her grief.

At the apartment, Jerry Cruncher and Miss Pross get ready to leave in their own carriage. Jerry swears that he will give up grave robbing, and states that his opinions about praying have changed. He adds that he hopes Mrs. Cruncher is praying right then.

Jerry leaves to make arrangements. Soon after, Madame Defarge arrives at the apartment and demands that Miss Pross let her see Lucie. Miss Pross refuses to budge from Lucie's bedroom door. Madame Defarge tries to shove her aside, but Miss Pross grabs her. During the ensuing struggle, Madame Defarge grabs for her pistol. But as she grabs the weapon it accidentally goes off, killing her. Miss Pross flees the apartment in terror. She meets up with Jerry and discovers that she has permanently lost her hearing.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 15

Three carts rumble through the Paris streets carrying the condemned prisoners to the guillotine. Some onlookers, used to the spectacle, are bored. Others gather to see Charles Evrémonde and insult him.

The Vengeance is in the crowd. She has been saving a front-row seat for Madame Defarge and holding her **knitting**. She bitterly regrets that her friend will miss the festivities.

Lucie kissed her hand to the prison as a gesture of loyalty and compassion. But the revolutionaries see it as an act of treason. The revolutionaries have given up all human feeling and mercy, as is shockingly apparent in Jacques Three's sick fantasy about murdering an innocent girl.



Madame Defarge combines the figures of Fate and Death. She is terrifying and inhuman. She represents death as opposed to resurrection, murder as opposed to sacrifice.



Jerry gives up his work as a "resurrection man" because that job belongs to Christ. With death (Madame Defarge) on the move, Jerry turns to religion to save him.



Lucie kissed Madame Defarge's hands and asked for mercy. That failed. Now, the faithful English servant Miss Pross wrestles with a faithless French former servant turned revolutionary. Madame Defarge's accidental suicide shows how the revolutionaries sow the seeds of their own destruction. In fact, as the Reign of Terror progressed, many French revolutionaries died under their own guillotines.



This alludes to Christ's journey to the crucifixion, during which Christ was also harassed and insulted by spectators.



Madame Defarge is separated from her knitting; the grip of fate has been broken.



The young woman is scheduled to be beheaded by the guillotine just before Carton. She thanks Carton for helping her stay composed, and says he must have been sent to her from Heaven. Carton tells her to focus only on him and to have no fear. When her time comes, they kiss, and she calmly goes to the **guillotine**. Carton is next. He says "I am the resurrection and the life." Carton ascends the platform, his face looking serene and prophetic, and the guillotine crashes down on his head.

The narrator describes Carton's final thoughts. He recognizes that Barsad, The Vengeance, and all the "new oppressors" will die by the **guillotine** they now celebrate. Yet he is also sure that Paris will rise up from its ashes, struggling to be free. He sees a vision of Lucie with a new son, named after him, who will live a successful and prosperous life. He also sees Dr. Manette restored to health, and Mr. Lorry leaving all his considerable wealth to the Manette's and then passing tranquilly away. And Carton knows he is blessed and treasured by all these people. The novel ends with Carton's final thoughts, "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."

As Christ comforted his fellow prisoners on the cross, Carton also comforts the girl, urging her to look past the suffering of politics toward a heavenly future. With such faith, the condemned have no fear. Carton's prayer suggests that they will live forever. His serene face implies the certainty of his salvation and resurrection, brought about through faith.



In Carton's vision, the revolutionaries who showed no mercy will not receive any, just like the aristocracy before them. The novel makes the case for mercy, in particular Christian mercy, as a vital force to counteract the tendency of the powerful toward tyranny, and suggests that France will eventually find this balance. For his selfless sacrifice, which alone could break the grip of fate and history, Carton is resurrected not just in heaven but also through Lucie's son, who lives out Lucie's hope that Carton would live a better life.





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