



A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

ABOUT THE STORY

A Tale of Two Cities is set in London and Paris in the time before and during the French Revolution (1775–1792). It is a historical novel that looks at the relationship between the rich and poor in Paris, focusing on how the aristocracy treat the peasants badly before the revolution and the terrible things that happen to the aristocracy during the revolution. It tells the story of a number of characters who live in Paris and London, and compares life in the two cities at this time. The novel was originally published in weekly instalments (extracts) in a magazine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charles Dickens was an English author and social critic born in England in 1812. As a child, his family were poor but generally happy. However, when he was ten, his family lost all of their money. As a result, his father was sent to prison and Dickens had to leave school at the age of 12 and go to work to support his family. This experience had a big effect on his life, and this became a common theme in many of his books, along with the theme of rich versus poor. When his father left prison, Dickens was able to return to school and from then his life got better. *A Tale of Two Cities* is one of two historical novels he wrote and was first published in 1859. Dickens died in 1870 at the age of just 58.



A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens

MACMILLAN READERS

with audio CD

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9:20

56%

It was the year 1775. A coach is taking Mr Jarvis Lorry from London to Dover. A man on a horse rides up to the coach.

To Dover

5 A man looked out of the window of the coach. He was about sixty years old and he wore old-fashioned clothes. He saw the rider and asked, 'What news do you bring, Jerry?'

10 'Do you know this man, sir?' asked the coach driver. 'There are robbers on this road'.

'I know him', replied the old man. 'His name is Jerry Cruncher. He has come from my bank. Jerry Cruncher is a messenger, not a robber'.

15 'Here is a letter for you, Mr Lorry', the messenger said. 'Mr Tellson wants you to wait at the Royal George Inn at Dover. A young lady will travel to Paris with you.'

'Thank you, Jerry,' Mr Lorry said. He took the letter.

20 'I will wait in Dover. Good night'.

Mr Lorry waited at the Royal George Inn at Dover. Miss Lucie Manette arrived the next day.

She was about eighteen years old and she had long golden hair.

25 'Miss Manette', said Mr Lorry, 'I work for Tellson's Bank. There is a Tellson's Bank in London and a Tellson's bank in Paris. I often travel between the two cities.'

30 'Twenty years ago, your father came to Tellson's bank in Paris', said Mr Lorry. 'He left some money in the bank'.

35 'Yes', said Lucie Manette. 'My father went to prison and he died. My mother brought me to England. I was very young. I have lived in England all my life. But my mother taught me French'.

'My mother died a few years ago', Lucie said. 'And Tellson's Bank took care of me.'

'Your father went to prison', Mr Lorry said. 'But he did not go to court. There was no trial'.

40 'That's right', said Lucie. 'My father died in prison'.

'No, my dear', said Mr Lorry. 'I have news of your father. He did not die in prison. He is alive and he is living in Paris. I will take you to see him'.

45 Lucie Manette put her hand to her face. 'Miss Pross!' she said loudly. Then she fainted.

VOCABULARY FOCUS

coach (line 5): a carriage pulled by horses

old-fashioned (line 7): the opposite of modern

inn (line 17): an old-fashioned hotel

golden (line 24): fair hair colour, similar to gold

court (line 39): a place where trials are decided

trial (line 39): an examination or discussion to decide if someone is guilty of a crime

fainted (line 45): to lose consciousness and fall down



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Before reading

1 The themes of Dickens' novels were often about opposing or contrasting ideas or subjects. Match the opposing themes 1-9 with a-i.

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| 1 greed | a adults |
| 2 crime | b countryside |
| 3 children | c hate |
| 4 cities | d cruelty |
| 5 wealth | e generosity |
| 6 darkness | f poverty |
| 7 kindness | g hope |
| 8 despair | h punishment |
| 9 love | i light |

2 Read *About the story* and *About the author*. Which of the themes above would you expect to see in *A Tale of Two Cities*? What other themes do you think there will be?

While reading

1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

- Where is the coach travelling to?
.....
- Who does the coach driver think Jerry Cruncher is?
.....
- What does the letter tell Jarvis Lorry to do?
.....
- Why does Jarvis Lorry travel a lot?
.....
- What does Lucie think happened to her father?
.....
- Why does she faint?
.....

2 Read the sentences. Are they True (T) or False (F)? Correct the false sentences.

- Mr Lorry wears modern clothes. T / F
- Jerry Cruncher works for Tellson's Bank. T / F
- Twenty years ago, Lucie Manette's father worked for Tellson's Bank. T / F
- Lucie Manette was born in England. T / F
- She speaks English and French. T / F
- Both of Lucie's parents are dead. T / F

3 The extract contains a number of contrasts between people, ideas and themes. Look at the contrasts below and find sentences in the extract that describe, explain or illustrate them.

- Mr Lorry and Lucie
.....
.....
- Who the coach driver thinks Jerry Cruncher is and the reality
.....
.....
- Lucie's belief of what happened to her father and the reality
.....
.....
- Lucie's life and her father's life
.....
.....

After reading

1 This is a novel about contrasts: it opens with the lines, 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.' Read the extract, *About the story* and *About the author* again and discuss these questions in pairs or small groups.

- What does the *About the author* section tell us about the good and bad times in Dickens' life?
- What does the *About the story* section tell us about the good and bad times in the novel as a whole?
- What good and bad times are described in the extract? What good and bad things do you think might happen next?

2 Work in pairs. You are going to continue the conversation between Lucie and Mr Lorry after Lucie wakes up. First, answer these questions.

- What are the similarities between Lucie's life and Dickens' early life? How do you think Lucie feels about her life?
- How do you think Lucie feels when she hears the news about her father?
- What questions do you think she has for Mr Lorry?
- Think about the character of Mr Lorry in contrast to Lucie. What are his feelings towards her now he has given her this news?

3 Stay in the same pairs and use your predictions from 1 question 3 and ideas in 2 to continue the conversation. One of you is Lucie and the other is Mr Lorry. Before you start, think about what you are going to say and about what might happen next.