

# *A Tale of Two Cities* Book Review

## 1 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 resembles Darnay in order to ruin the main witness's credibility.

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.

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.

## 2 Review

One of the greatest novels ever written. I've never seen a ranking that didn't include this novel. If you have ever wondered what it was like to live through the French Revolution, then read this novel. Through Dickens' words you feel the anger, the hopelessness, the insecurity, and most of all the fear that enveloped everyone. It was a pleasure and a privilege to read this masterpiece.