



- “Strange Fruit” - Billie Holiday
- “At War” – Barbara Salama (poem)
- “ABC Café / Red & Black” - Les Miserables Cast
- “French Revolution” - Lillia Talts Morrison (poem)
- “Sunday Bloody Sunday” - U2
- “Do You Hear the People Sing” - Les Miserables Cast
- “Revolution” - Beatles
- “The Haunted Oak” – Paul Laurence Dunbar (poem)

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Rule of the Mob

As Thomas Jefferson once said, "A democracy is nothing more than mob rule, where fifty-one percent of the people may take away the rights of the other forty-nine." Even if one group was once oppressed it is important that when they come into power they protect the rights of the minority. The French Revolution fails to do so, the reign of terror saw people killed without trial and gruesome acts done by the revolutionaries. An important theme of Charles Dicken's "A Tale of Two Cities" is that revolutions, though sometimes justified, tend towards violence and oppression. Even if the revolution is justified (which the French Revolution was) they tend to be extremely violent and end in oppression. The character of Madame Defarge perfectly represents the theme that revolutions, though sometimes justified, tend towards violence and oppression. Though the Marquis Evrémont was a ruthless aristocrat the violence that erupted does not correct the misdeeds done by the aristocracy. Madame Defarge represents this theme and the music, its order, and my album cover further the theme that revolutions, though sometimes justified, tend towards violence and oppression.

The cover of my album shows a bloody fist raised in the air. The fist represents the spirit of revolution found within Madame Defarge and it is bloody because of all the gruesome acts committed by her. Another detail is the guillotines in the background. The guillotine was a tool of the revolution to make the executions of the reign of terror more 'humane.' Sydney Carton ultimately dies on the guillotine and so do thousands of others during the reign of terror. In the top left corner is the Tricolor flag of France. This flag used by the revolution has the red part of it bloodied, representing all the blood needlessly spilled during the course of the revolution. I titled it 'Rule of the Mob' because in "A Tale of Two Cities" chaos occurs in France when the revolt ensues and the mob take power. This leads to the

gruesome acts we see in the novel. Even though the majority are rightfully in power they don't protect the rights of others leading to mob rule. The goal of the album cover is to represent the bloodiness of the French Revolution.

The first song of my concept album is "Strange Fruit" by Billie Holiday. "Strange Fruit" is a song about the racial injustice in the Jim Crow south. The line, "Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze" is talking about lynchings in the South that oftentimes went ignored by the authorities. So how does this relate to Madame Defarge and "A Tale of Two Cities"? This song shows the pain and brutality that African Americans suffered in the Jim Crow South and similar to how the French people were oppressed. In the eyes of Madame Defarge the French people were slaves to the aristocracy. And just like white people often got away with a lynching in the Jim Crow South, so can the Marquis when riding over and killing a child.

The gruesome acts that we see committed by the revolution isn't just exclusive to Paris. When the people got their hands on the Marquis they murdered him in the countryside. In the poem "At War" by Barbara Salama the author describes a rebellion in a countryside that is bloody and where the two sides perpetually dislike each other. This helps further the theme that rebellions tend to be violent with the bloodiness described here. Madame Defarge supports these bloody rebellions as she committed many gruesome acts in the name of the rebellion.

The musical *Les Miserable* is also about the French Revolution and portrays the ideas found within "A Tale of Two Cities." The song "ABC Café / Red & Black" sung by the cast of the play could almost seem to be talking about Saint Antoine. One line in the song reads, "Students, workers, everyone there's a river on the run like the flowing of the tide Paris coming to our side." The people of Paris are described as a river in the song, while in "A Tale of Two Cities" when the people are storming the Bastille they are described as an ocean and waves. To Madame Defarge these are just the people acting 'justly' against those who wronged them and so to her this wave and river of revolution is a positive thing.

The poem “French Revolution” by Lillia Talts Morrison discusses another aspect of the eruption that was the French Revolution. The author of the poem writes about how the revolution was long coming as the nobility of France stomped on its fragile society. The author also discusses how the peasantry tore down the bastille ‘brick by brick’ something we see Madame Defarge partake in as she orders those without weapons to take any loose brick to fight.

The U2 song “Sunday Bloody Sunday” is about the violence and bloodshed in Northern Ireland during the 1972 ‘Bloody Sunday’ civil rights protests. In these peaceful protests British soldiers opened fire on a crowd of peaceful protesters. This sparked more outrage and led to more violence. This relates to the French Revolution as in the eyes of U2 the people of Northern Ireland were oppressed by the British as were the people of France by the nobility. Madame Defarge would agree that the people of France were not even allowed to voice their protests and this is what opened the madness that was the French Revolution. This is similar to what U2 sings about since this massacre by the British led to more bombings by the IRA.

Another songs (unsurprisingly) from Les Miserable can support the theme that revolution, though sometimes justified, tend towards violence and oppression. The song “Do You Hear the People Sing” sung by the cast of the musical discusses ideas supported by Madame Defarge. In the song it says, “Do you hear the people sing? Singing a song of angry men? It is the music of a people who will not be slaves again.” The revolution in the eyes of Madame Defarge was about freeing the people and overthrowing their oppressors. However, in the process the revolution oppresses the people who disagree with them and with the reign of terror they begin to execute all who show slight disagreement with their radical ideals. Though the people are freed they begin to oppress others. Madame Defarge would be ok with this idea since to her these acts are justified. As long as the majority are in power any horrible acts are justified to her.

But not everyone agrees with the brutal acts of the revolutionary Madame Defarge. Charles Darnay understands that the nobility oppressed the people of France, however he didn’t agree with the violence of the revolution. He is even imprisoned and sentenced to death for the crimes of his ancestors.

The song “Revolution” by the Beatles discusses how a revolution could become nothing more than violence and that it is not always the right thing to do and get things done. The song asks whether or not revolutions bring about real change. And in the case of the French Revolution and many others it doesn’t bring the change intended. This goes against the actions of Madame Defarge as she uses the revolution to justify her brutal acts even though it’s not making real change. Darnay and Madame Defarge disagree on the success of the revolution and whether brutality is justified.

My final poem is “The Haunted Oak” by Paul Laurence Dunbar. This poem again talks about lynchings of the American South, however now the unjust murders aren’t being done by the nobility but instead the revolutionary mob. The poem talks about men falsely imprisoned and then being murdered unjustly. This is similar to the fate of Sydney Carton who was executed for the crimes of a different man’s ancestors. The once oppressed have become the oppressors and the mob now have control. Though at this point Madame Defarge is dead it was her gory acts that we see repeated by the mob. Defarge would disagree that the revolution is as bad as the nobility, but in reality they are worse. The blood spilled by the revolution stains France and this is all amplified by the acts of Madame Defarge.

Mob rule is the tyranny of the majority. Though the people should control the power of France they abuse this power and use it to terrorize and oppress others. Madame Defarge uses the ideas of the revolution to justify her violence. Through these songs and poems Madame Defarge amplifies the theme that revolutions, though sometimes justified, tend towards violence and oppression.