

# ***A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens (Published by Chapman and Hall)**

Approved for use in Communication Arts II, Honors Communication Arts II

## **Summary**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times” begins this classic tale of pre-revolutionary war France. Originally published in serial format, *A Tale of Two Cities* is a story of intrigue, betrayal, sacrifice, honor, courage, and love. The DeFarge family (Parisian revolutionaries) reunites Lucie Manette (raised in England) with her father (Doctor Manette) who was held as a political prisoner in the Bastille for many years. Lucie falls in love with the dashing Charles Darnay, a Frenchman who chooses to live in London having rejected his family’s aristocratic lifestyle. Sydney Carton, a Darnay look-alike, is also in love with the beautiful Lucie. Lucie marries Darnay who must return to France where he is captured and sentenced to death by guillotine. Seeing his love for Lucie as the only good thing in his life, Carton switches places with Darnay in prison and goes to his death feeling redeemed for his sinful life.

## **Connection to the Curriculum**

Because it is set during the French Revolution, *A Tale of Two Cities* provides a strong cross-curricular link to AP European history, which is also taught at the sophomore level. Students develop an understanding and appreciation for the nineteenth century novel as well as the values and cultures of nineteenth-century Europe. *A Tale of Two Cities* is both complex in style and plot, which provides advanced readers practice applying many close reading skills such as recognizing and evaluating tone, syntax, and diction—standards of both the AP, ACT, and SAT exams.

## **Standards**

### **Course Objectives (Benchmarks)**

**Reading:** 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

**Literature:** 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

**Writing:** 3.2- The students use a writing process that includes preparing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing to produce a written text.

### **Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)**

#### **Reading:**

- 1.2.1- The student adjusts reading rate to support comprehension when reading narrative texts.
- 1.3.2- The student discriminates between connotative and denotative meanings and interprets the connotative power of words.
- 1.3.5- The student identifies, interprets, and analyzes the use of figurative language including similes, metaphors, analogies, hyperbole, and symbolism.
- 1.4.3- The student uses prior knowledge, content, and text type features to make, revise, and confirm predictions.
- 1.4.11- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.
- 1.4.14- The student explains and analyzes cause-effect relationships in appropriate-level narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive texts.

#### **Literature:**

- 2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters.
- 2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.
- 2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates how the author uses various plot elements.
- 2.1.4- The student analyzes themes, tone, and author’s point of view.
- 2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices.

#### **Writing:**

- 3.1.5 and 3.2.5- The student writes personal, persuasive, narrative, and expository pieces.

**A Note on the Text:** (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)  
*A Tale of Two Cities, due to its setting, deals with the tragedies of war and other violence including several beheadings. In addition, the descriptions of the guillotine can be a bit distracting for readers. All of these scenes, however, are part of the development of Dickens’ classic historical fiction tale.*

## **AP Connections**

Questions over Charles Dickens’ works may appear on both AP III and IV exams. This is one of Dickens’ masterpieces and appears on many pre-college recommended reading lists.

## **Additional Unit Design Connections**

Coming soon:  
To be completed during future curriculum development activities