

## Approved for use in all English II classes

### Summary of the Work:

"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. Blue Valley School District Rationales-10

### Rationale:

"*A Tale of Two Cities* is an excellent choice of reading material for senior high school students. It is probably the least "Dickensian" of his fourteen novels in that it has less of the grotesque, fewer characters, more big scenes, and a less complicated plot. These differences make it especially accessible to high school students. Much of the novel's value lies in its structure, creativity, and explorations of timeless themes. As a historical novel, it serves as an excellent example of this genre. The fact that Dickens is able to weave the simple lives of ordinary people into the mosaic of a cataclysmic historical event is an indication of his genius, and another reason to read the book..."

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/reading/activity/4138.html>

### Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

**"Charles Dickens: A Tale of Two Cities," in Characters in Young Adult Literature, Gale Research, 1997. Reproduced in Literature Resource Center.**

Woodcock, George, "*A Tale of Two Cities*: Overview" in Reference Guide to English Literature, 2nd ed., edited by D. L. Kirkpatrick, St. James Press, 1991. Reproduced in Literature Resource Center.

Orwell, George. "Charles Dickens." *A Collection of Essays*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1946) ISBN 0-15-618600-4

### Noted Distinction:

- Project Gutenberg E-Book
- Outstanding Books for the College Bound
- Britain's 21 best-loved novels by the British public as part of the BBC's The Big Read, 2003

### Readability:

- Lexile Score: 1130L
- Readability Level: 10.6

### Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

### Standard Alignment: ([link](#))

### Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption:

### Notes 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.

### 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.

### Additional Connections:

*(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)*

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.