A Tale of Two Cities

by CHARLES DICKENS
adapted for the stage
by LAURA EASON
directed by JESSICA THEBUS
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It was the best of times,
it was the worst of times,
it was the age of wisdom,
it was the age of foolishness,
it was the epoch of belief,
it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of Light,
it was the season of Darkness,
it was the spring of hope,
it was the winter of despair,
we had everything before us,
we had nothing before us,
we were all going direct to Heaven,
we were all going direct the other way--
in short, the period was
so far like the present period,
that some of its noisiest authorities
insisted on it being received,
for good or for evil,
in the superlative degree of comparison only.

-A Tale of Two Cities
In 1775, France entered a period of social upheaval and political corruption. The play begins during this unsettling time with the Marquis St. Evrémonde and his nephew Charles riding in their carriage through the poverty-ridden streets of the St. Antoine district. When the carriage kills a baby in the road, Charles fully sees the vile nature of his uncle. He denounces his aristocratic family name and declares his intent to move to England to be rid of the Evrémonde name forever.

In London, that same year, the elderly Jarvis Lorry has been sent to Lucie Manette with an urgent message. Lorry informs Lucie that her father, Dr. Alexandre Manette, has been found alive after an 18-year imprisonment in the Bastille. The two travel immediately to Paris where Dr. Manette is being cared for.

Lucie and Lorry find Dr. Manette in the care of a former servant, Ernest Defarge, in his wine shop in Paris. They discover Dr. Manette only knows his identity as "One Hundred and Five, North Tower," his cell in the Bastille. Lucie and Lorry, with the fragile Dr. Manette in tow, board a packet ship bound for London where they will "recall him to life."

Five years later, in 1780, Lucie and her father are living peacefully in London when they are called upon to be witnesses at a trial against Charles Darnay, a fellow passenger aboard the packet ship from France. At the trial Sydney Carton, a rough man who bears a striking resemblance to Charles, represents him. Charles is accused of treason based on a conversation a witness overheard onboard the ship. Lucie testifies that Charles was of great help to her in caring for her father on the trip. Dr. Manette testifies that he can remember nothing before his arrival in London. Carton wins the case by pointing out his uncanny resemblance to Charles, therefore proving that there is no possible way to be sure that Charles is the exact person the witness saw.

Four years pass bringing Lucie and Charles closer. It is now 1784. Charles discusses marriage with Dr. Manette and during that conversation reveals that he is not a "Darnay" but an "Evrémonde." This information sends Dr. Manette into a short but deep depression. Despite this, he gives Charles his blessing. Meanwhile, Carton tells Lucie of his feelings of love for her. He promises to do anything for her and the people she loves. Charles returns from speaking with Dr. Manette and proposes to Lucie. They are married shortly after.

Five years later, in 1789, Charles, Lucie, Dr. Manette and the new baby, Little Lucie are all living together in London. Lorry has moved to Paris, and Carton continues to visit the family.

In July of 1789, the French Revolution begins with the Storming of the Bastille, lead by Ernest Defarge. He leads his troops into the Bastille and demands to be taken to One Hundred and Five, North Tower to search for something of great importance.
Three years later, in 1791, Charles intercepts a letter addressed to the "Heretofore Marquis St. Evrémonde" the title which he would have held, had he remained in France. It is a letter from an old servant, Gabelle, who has been imprisoned. He asks for Charles' help immediately. Charles gathers his things and leaves for Paris that same night. Upon his arrival he is discovered to be the new Marquis St. Evrémonde, the sole heir to the family name since the death of his Uncle. He is arrested on site and taken to the prison, La Force.

Lucie and her father travel to Lorry's home in Paris to help Charles. Dr. Manette is able to use his reputation as a former prisoner of the Bastille to have Charles released. The same night, he is re-captured by the Defarges and sent to La Conciergerie, one of the largest revolutionary prisons. He will stand trial the next day against unknown charges.

Just after the soldiers and Defarges leave, Carton arrives and offers his services to the family. Despite everyone's efforts to have Charles freed, the trial begins the next day. The Defarges call Dr. Manette as a witness based on a letter he wrote while imprisoned in the Bastille, explaining the reason for his captivity and exposing the hideous nature of Charles' family. In the letter, Manette damns the St. Evrémonde family "To Heaven and to Earth." This is enough to sentence Charles an execution by guillotine the following afternoon.

Carton, keeping his promise to give Lucie a "life she loves," creates a plan to save Charles by switching places with him and dying in his place. The plan works perfectly and Charles escapes France with his family. Carton takes Charles' place at the guillotine. Before he is executed, he thinks on the love that Lucie will always have for him, and the child she will one day name after him. The play ends with his thoughts and the peace they bring him before his death.

"I SEE HIM BRINGING A BOY OF MY NAME, WITH A FOREHEAD THAT I KNOW AND GOLDEN HAIR, TO THIS PLACE-- THEN FAIR TO LOOK UPON WITH NOT A TRACE OF THIS DAY'S DISFIGUREMENT-- AND I HEAR HIM TELL THE CHILD MY STORY. IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER THING I DO, THAN I HAVE EVER DONE. IT IS A FAR, FAR BETTER REST I GO TO THAN I HAVE EVER KNOWN."

- SYDNEY CARTON
CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Charles Darnay
A former French aristocrat who leaves his heritage for a life in England. He meets and marries Lucie Manette in England. When he returns to France during the Revolution, he is arrested and sentenced to die for being a member of the St. Evrémonde family.

Sydney Carton
A hardened lawyer who represents Charles at his trial in England. Carton believes that he loves no one and no one loves him, but later he realizes his true feelings for Lucie. He and Charles look almost exactly alike.

The Marquis St. Evrémonde
Charles' uncle, and the representation of all members of the French aristocracy.

Swing Ensemble
Various roles throughout the production. Specifically:

The Witness
The bribed witness against Charles at his trial in England

Gabelle
The carriage driver in St. Antoine and later the servant who asks for Charles's help during the Revolution.
**Lucie Manette**
The beautiful daughter of Dr. Manette. She represents the purest form of innocence and love. She is married to Charles and is loved from a distance by Sydney Carton.

**Dr. Alexandre Manette**
A prisoner of the Bastille for 18 years. Restored to spiritual and physical heath by his daughter Lucie. He has little memory of his past, though he was once a respected physician in Paris.

**Jarvis Lorry**
An aging employee of Tellson's Bank. A loyal friend to the Manette family throughout his life.

**Madame Therese Defarge**
A fierce woman at the head of the French Revolution. She keeps count of enemies to the revolution in her knitting while at her husband Ernest's wine shop.

**Monsieur Ernest Defarge**
Husband of Madame Defarge, a revolutionary leader, wine shop owner, and former servant of Dr. Manette.
INTERVIEW WITH THE ADAPTER AND DIRECTOR

Steppenwolf's Arts Exchange Program has been critically acclaimed for being "highly sophisticated" and "tackling deeply thought-provoking and challenging" material. But can you really create a 90-minute adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities for high school audiences? Associate Artistic Director Curt Columbus talked to adapter Laura Eason and director Jessica Thebus about this exciting new work.

Curt Columbus: What were your first responses when you started this project?

Jessica Thebus: I had recently re-read A Tale of Two Cities, and I cried and cried at the end. I thought, THIS is a story that should have a new adaptation. Then questions arise like, how does it stay epic, how does it have all the delight of the plot and the characters that Dickens gave it, and still communicate theatrically in a compressed way. That has been the daunting task from the very beginning.

Laura Eason: It's certainly a big job, but I've had experience with these kinds of adaptations at my theatre company, Lookingglass. We've done really epic adaptations of novels that seem impossible to transition from the page to the stage, like The Master and Margarita, Hard Times and The Jungle. But you do it, and you find a lot of really amazing solutions along the way. I know from my experience with working with Jessica as a director and a co-adapter on the piece that we did at Lookingglass, I just knew that we were going to find these solutions. I was sure that I could just pick up the phone and say, "Jessica, there's a problem, how are we going to storm the Bastille?"

CC: Why are we drawn to Dickens' novels for adaptation?

LE: He's just a master story teller. His characters are so vivid you want to see them live, you want to see them embodied in front of you. I've been drawn to his writing forever. You know, Dickens himself was an actor, and his work is so theatrical in the novel form. He would sit in his room and act out all of the characters as he was writing. That just comes across so clearly. The level of theatricality that is present in all of his work, helps in conceiving of them for the stage.
CC: What's so special about *A Tale of Two Cities*?

JT: First, as Laura said, there are the incredibly vivid characters. Everyone who has ever read the novel has a favorite. People will say, "I read it in the 7th grade, and I remember Madame Defarge. I remember the women knitting at the foot of the guillotine."

Then, the ideas that the book takes on, like what one person can do to change the world around them. And the idea of a noble ethical sacrifice in the midst of oppression. For a contemporary audience there is a lot of resonance to phrases like, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times."

These opposites exist very vividly for us today. The brutal chaos of the world of the book and of the present times, and yet, people are carving out there own little sanctuaries and are willing to sacrifice for each other. Dickens puts you on the ground, in the midst of this historical violence, which really sheds light on what we're living through today.

CC: So, what do you leave out when you're doing a ninety-minute version?

JT: The comedy. (they laugh)

CC: Oh good. Cut out the comedy. That's smart. (laugh)

LE: Well, it is true that we cut a lot of the comic characters. So Miss Pross is gone, Jerry Cruncher is gone, many of the secondary comic characters are gone. Jessica is partly kidding, but it's also true. You have to make decisions, you have to take such a big knife to this brilliant book. But it's the very act of cutting things that really helps frame the adaptation. We had such specific parameters - we had eight actors, we needed a fluid staging environment, and we needed to keep the time to around an hour and a half. If I didn't have those limitations, it would have taken me five years to adapt.

JT: One of the things that we talked about early on was that it's that final moment on the guillotine that makes the story so powerful. So if we need that moment, then we need to build backwards from there so that everything makes sense emotionally and narratively to lead to that moment. To that moment of the sacrifice.

LE: So, the main focus of the story is once we get to France, and everything before that needs to be the back story that lets us care about what happens in France. Once that course was charted, it became extremely clear.
**La Bastille** - A fortress built on the edge of Paris in the 14th century. It was originally intended to defend the city, though in the 1500's it became a king's castle. By the late 1700's it was a prison for political enemies of the King and nobles. The prisoners were held with no trial, often indefinitely. In 1789, an angry mob stormed the Bastille and freed the remaining prisoners. There were few prisoners at that time, but the event was a powerful symbol of the will of the people overcoming that of the king. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dr. Manette is a prisoner of the Bastille.

**Bourgeoisie** - The class of merchants and professionals who became increasingly wealthy in the time preceding the French Revolution. They and the other members of the Third Estate (all those in France who were not nobles or clergy) paid all of the taxes to support the aristocracy and church. As the bourgeoisie became wealthier, they had the leisure time necessary to protest the policies of the monarchy. Their actions led to the start of the Revolution.

**La Conciergerie** - Built in the 14th century, it was a place of imprisonment, torture and death during the Revolution. La Conciergerie is now the Palais de Justice.

**Emigrant or Émigré** - A refugee from a revolution. During the French Revolution, most émigrés were nobles and royalists (one group formed a counterrevolutionary army to restore the old regime), so they were considered enemies of the Revolution. Their property was seized, and they were banished forever from France by the Convention, a Revolutionary National Assembly. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Charles is taken prisoner upon his return to France because he is considered an émigré and hence an enemy of the people.

**Saint Antoine District** - An area of Paris near the Bastille. Revolts before and during the Revolution took place there. It is in this district where the Marquis St. Evrémonde runs over a baby in the street.
La Force - A prison in Paris where enemies of the French Revolution were kept.

Girondin - A moderate revolutionary. Focused on ideals and philosophy rather than action.

Jacobin - A member of the Jacobin political club during the Revolution. They were promoters of extreme violence and action.

Jacques - Nickname in *A Tale of Two Cities* for members of the Defarge's revolutionary party.

Old Bailey - London's criminal court. Although verdicts were decided by juries, judges commonly threw out cases thought to have little merit. Since the government offered money to witnesses who reported crimes (London had no real police force), "thief-takers" frequently made false accusations in order to get a reward.

Packet ship - A passenger and mail ship with a regular schedule of arrivals and departures.

Revolutionary Tribunal - The court instituted to hear cases of treason against the people of France during the Reign of Terror. The only punishment for treason was death at the guillotine, and almost no one was found innocent.

Rue - [French] Street.

Tumbril - Cart used during the Revolution to carry dead bodies from the execution site.
**Les Tuileries**

Residence of the Royal Family - symbol of the Monarchy - Louis XIV resided at the Tuileries Palace while his chateau, Versailles, was under construction. When he left the building was abandoned and used only as a theater until the reign of Louis XV.
SECTION THE SECOND
A TALE OF TWO CITIES
THE BOOK

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“Tell wind and fire where to stop,
but don’t tell me!”
- Madame Defarge
CHARACTERS APPEARING ONLY IN THE BOOK

In Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*, many supporting characters were included to fill out subplots, add humorous elements, and enrich the world of the story.

**MISS PROSS:**
The maidservant of Lucie Manette. She is loyal to Lucie throughout the book and refers to her as "Ladybird." She routinely states her love and devotion to Lucie and is steadfast in protecting her. She is also in search of a long-lost brother.

**MR. STRYVER:**
The lawyer who defends Charles at his trial in England. He is Carton's boss and a very refined gentleman of little kindness.

**JERRY CRUNCHER:**
A grave robber for hire and general lowlife. He serves as a messenger for Tellson's bank and is the original handler of the message "Recalled to life," eventually given to Jarvis Lorry and Lucie Manette.

**CHALLENGE QUESTION:**
Which scene would you choose to illustrate and why?

**THESE IMAGES ARE TAKEN FROM THE ORIGINAL ETCHINGS USED TO ILLUSTRATE A TALE OF TWO CITIES IN ITS ORIGINAL SERIAL PUBLICATION. THESE IMAGES APPEAR THROUGHOUT THE GUIDE AND ARE A VALUABLE LINK TO THE STORY ITSELF.**
JOHN BARSARD/SOLOMAN PROSS:
Works for Roger Cly. He also gives false testimony at Charles' first trial. He helps Carton trade places with Charles at the end of the story. He appears with Cly regularly, generally spying on people. He turns out to be the long lost brother Miss Pross has been searching for.

JACQUES III:

ROGER CLY:
A double agent working for England and France during the Revolution. He fakes his own death to escape England after being caught testifying falsely against Charles at his first trial.

JOHN BARSARD/SOLOMAN PROSS:
Works for Roger Cly. He also gives false testimony at Charles' first trial. He helps Carton trade places with Charles at the end of the story. He appears with Cly regularly, generally spying on people. He turns out to be the long lost brother Miss Pross has been searching for.
**CHANGES IN THE STORYLINE**

Since the play A Tale of Two Cities is focused on the main plot between Charles, Lucie and Carton, there are some changes that have been made to event sequences and plotlines in order to make the story more appropriate for the stage. The following are some of the more significant changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IN THE BOOK:</th>
<th>IN THE PLAY:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The story begins with the delivery of the message from Jerry Cruncher to Jarvis Lorry about the survival of Dr. Manette.</td>
<td>- The play begins with the carriage incident and the murder of the child.</td>
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- When the Marquis St. Evrémonde (Charles' uncle) runs down and kills a child with his carriage, Charles has already moved to England to escape his privileged life in France and has already been tried for treason in England. Charles never knows about the carriage accident, which takes place the evening before his visit in France. While he is back, his uncle is murdered to revenge the child's death. Although Charles does not know the exact motive for the murder, he believes that his uncle was evil and deserved his fate. He is disgusted by his family and renounces his name and his title of "Marquis," which he has inherited upon his uncle's death.

- Charles has not yet left France when the child is killed, and he witnesses his uncle's callous behavior toward the child's family. It is this incident which drives him to forsake his name and move to England. He does not learn of his uncle's death and his inheritance of the title "Marquis" until he receives a desperate letter from a former servant which leads him to return to France.

- The Marquis St. Evrémonde is stabbed in the chest in his sleep. The knife reads, "Drive him fast to his tomb, this from Jaques."

- We learn about the murder of the Marquis St. Evrémonde through French ex-patriots.

- Charles is represented by Mr. Stryver at his trial in England. Lucie meets Stryver, Carton, and Charles at the same time and is pursued by all three of them. Mr. Stryver comes to propose to Lucie one day prior to Charles. Mr. Lorry persuades Stryver not to ask for her hand, saying that she doesn't love him.

- Carton is the sole counsel for Charles at his trial. Though Carton is in love with Lucie, Charles is the only suitor to make a proposal.

- There is a trial in France that precedes Charles' final trial. During this trial Dr. Manette uses his reputation as a former Bastille prisoner to have Charles released.

- There is only one trial in France.

- Charles spends 18 months in prison before the first trial in France. During that time Lucie stands outside his window from two o'clock to four o'clock every day.

- The event is alluded to but the timeframe is condensed.

- Madame Defarge comes to kill Lucie and her daughter as they are about to escape from France. Miss Pross struggles with her and eventually Madame Defarge is shot and killed by her own gun. Miss Pross locks the body in the closet and the family leaves Paris forever.

- This event does not occur.
Charles Dickens was born in Landport, England on February 7th, 1812. Charles was the second of eight children. His father, who was a clerk in the Navy pay office, often ended up in financial trouble. In 1814 Dickens moved to London and then to Chatham, where his parents encouraged his early devotion to eighteenth-century prose masters such as Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith, and Tobias Smollett. When his family returned to London in 1824, 12-year old Charles was sent to work in a shoe-polish factory to supplement the family income; shortly afterward his father was arrested and taken to the Marshalsea debtor’s prison. After four months of hard work in the factory he continued his studies at the Wellington House Academy in London. Between the ages of twelve and fifteen he was already trying his hand at the styles of writing that would one day make him famous. At fifteen he became a law office clerk and then worked as a shorthand reporter in the London law courts. For several years he alternated reporting, exploring the London streets, and reading avidly at the British Museum. In the 1840’s Dickens founded a new weekly periodical, *Master Humphry’s Clock*, and edited the *London Daily News*.

Dickens’ career as a writer of fiction started in 1833 when his short stories and essays appeared in periodicals. In 1836, Dickens published two works which would launch his career. The first was *Sketches By Boz*, a collection of series of tales and sketches he wrote under the pseudonym of “Boz,” and the second was *The Pickwick Papers*, a satirical masterpiece. Many of Dickens’ novels first appeared in monthly installments, including *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), *Nicholas Nickelby* (1838-39), and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41).
Beginning in 1860, Dickens lived at Gad’s Hill Place, in Kent, near Rochester, a house he discovered when he was a boy during a walk with his father. His father noted his interest and told Charles that if he “were to be very persevering and work very hard” he might one day live there. And he did, until his death on June 9th, 1870.
When Dickens was writing, most middle class people could not afford the price of a novel. In fact, a single book cost more than most workers earned in a month. Rather than resign himself to a smaller audience of wealthy readers, Dickens began to publish his work in serial form - one or two chapters at a time, in installments that came out weekly or monthly. Sometimes a newspaper or magazine would carry the stories, but more often they were published as their own booklets, bound in green paper and filled with advertisements for all kinds of goods and services. The advertisements helped keep the price within the reach of the middle class. All of Dickens' major novels were published serially at first and only later released as single editions.

Dickens was not the first author to employ serial publication. In the late 17th century, a new tax was placed on newspapers. Since a newspaper was defined as being a certain size, many publications began using bigger paper so that they could be defined as "pamphlets" and escape the tax. Bigger paper meant more space to fill, so newspapers began to publish episodes of stories and travelogues. The serials, in turn, enticed more people to buy the newspapers that carried them. By the 19th century, the newspaper tax did not exist, and until Dickens published The Pickwick Papers in 1836, serial publication had fallen out of fashion. Dickens' novels were very successful, and many other writers followed his lead, including Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, and George Eliot.
Just as people today tune into the same TV shows week after week, Dickens' readers eagerly read news of their favorite heroes and most despised villains. To ensure his readers' impatience to buy the next chapter, Dickens often ended installments with surprise revelations or sudden plot twists. Once people began to read a story, they were loyal to it, continuing to buy installments until its end. Since publishers and advertisers did not want to lose this devoted audience, they encouraged authors to keep the stories going for as long as possible. To a modern reader, books of this period sometimes seem unwieldy - they are typically long and follow many characters through adventures that span decades - but when read in parts (especially with the dramatic illustrations that accompanied each installment), they are exciting and absorbing. People became attached to the stories and their characters, discussing them between installments as people now talk about the characters in television shows. Readers' reactions sometimes even changed the course of the story: Dickens might bring back a popular character or add action if his audience got bored.

**Challenge Question:**

**Try out serial publication in your classroom:**
- Divide a book into sections and hand out each section only after reading the previous one. How does waiting for the next installment change the relationship to the story?

**OR...**
- Write a story in serial form. Do readers reactions influence the way the story evolves?
ADDITIONAL WORKS BY CHARLES DICKENS

FICTION
A Christmas Carol
Barnaby Rudge
Bleak House
David Copperfield
Dombey And Son
Great Expectations
Hard Times
Lazy Tour Of Two Idle Apprentices
Little Dorrit
Martin Chuzzlewit
Master Humphrey's Clock
Nicholas Nickleby
No Thoroughfare
Oliver Twist
Our Mutual Friend
The Battle Of Life
The Chimes
The Cricket On The Hearth
The Mystery of Edwin Drood
The Old Curiosity Shop
The Pickwick Papers

NON-FICTION
A Child's History of England
American Notes
Pictures From Italy

SHORT STORIES
The Signal-Man
The Child's Story

"MINDS, LIKE BODIES, WILL OFTEN FALL INTO A PIMPLED, ILL-CONDITIONED STATE FROM MERE EXCESS OF COMFORT."

- Charles Dickens
SECTION THE THIRD

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Place de la Concorde today
SUMMARY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION FROM 1789-1794

“LIBERTÉ, Egalité, Fraternité, ou la mort!”
-SLOGAN OF THE REVOLUTION

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, or Death!” - English Translation

The French Revolution began in 1789 with the Storming of the Bastille, an infamous prison in Paris notorious for keeping political prisoners. The prisoners were all released when an angry mob attacked on the 14th of July. Eventually, the King and Queen of France, Louis XVI and his wife Marie-Antoinette, were both imprisoned and executed, as were thousands of aristocrats and others thought to be "enemies of the revolution." Almost all the executions during the Revolution were by the guillotine, a 14 foot tall device capable of dropping a razor sharp blade down onto the necks of victims at speeds of up to 80 miles an hour. The guillotine worked day and night on Place de la Concorde. All executions were public, and they were very well attended.

During the days of the Reign of Terror, 1793-1794, thousands of innocent people were guillotined due to rising suspicion of anti-revolutionary sentiments. During the September Massacres of 1792, nearly 1200 people were killed in only 25 days. What began as a Revolution that stood up for the poor and underrepresented, turned into mob terror and paranoid violence.

Robespierre led the Reign of Terror. Under his guidance, verdicts at trials could be only "innocent" or "death." The number of executions greatly increased. Many times the trials were held by Revolutionary Tribunals who were unwilling to believe any evidence that proved innocence. A trial during this time was merely a formality before an almost inevitable execution. Robespierre himself was beheaded at the end of his reign.

However, out of the fear and terror, the First Republic was born in France with the Constitutional Monarchy abolished in 1792. The First Republic had to face both a civil war and an external war as European Kings tried to invade the country. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was written to secure the same rights for all citizens. The new government acknowledged the rights of the individual and the equal representation of all citizens. The French Revolution served as a model for many national revolutions in the world, though the cost, in lives, was high.
Beginning in the late 17th century, philosophers began thinking and writing about a new set of ideas. Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Diderot, and many others were at the forefront of this period of great change, the Age of Enlightenment. Their ideas would lead to revolution and social upheaval in many countries, including France and the United States.

The movement was based on several key principals, including the individual rights of man. While there were many different opinions about how to make government better and more just, there was general agreement that the old system of hereditary rule had to end.

"Man is not noble by birth, but virtue," wrote Voltaire, meaning it should be deeds, not inheritance that endows an individual with social standing. In most monarchies, the kings were chosen by lineage, and viewed as though their families had been chosen to rule by God. Since the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers questioned the right of the nobility to rule (and therefore threatened the government) those who thought this system needed to change had to keep their views secret. As Voltaire said, "It is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong."

Around 1775, the works of Voltaire and Rousseau began making their way to the Bourgeoisie of France, opening their eyes to the possibilities of a country ruled by all of the people, not just those born with money and land. The principles driving the French Revolution rested on the Enlightenment idea of the natural rights of man, and the desire for government based on fair representation. Rousseau pushed even harder than some other philosophers for personal liberty, saying, "To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man, to surrender the rights of humanity and even its duties."

These same ideas had driven the American Revolution, which served as inspiration and a template for the people of France. Although our two countries struggled against different problems, the ideas which guided them were the same. Benjamin Franklin and many other freedom fighters read the very same books which moved the people of France to transform their country. Both countries took to heart the notion that freedom and personal liberty is essential and must be fought for desperately. In the words of Voltaire, "Every man has the right to risk his life for the preservation of it."

"I may not agree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

- Voltaire
**1774**
Louis XVI ascends to the throne.

**1775**
The bourgeoisie begins reading the works of philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu, and many begin to question the seigniorial system and nobility by birth.

**July 14th, 1789**

**1788**
Estates General called to meet in Paris by King Louis XVI.

**October, 1789**
7000 men and women march to the palace at Versailles in search of food and end up taking the King and Queen prisoner in their own palace.

**JUNE, 1789**
Third Estate declares the Tennis Court Oath and the National Assembly is formed to represent the Third Estate in the government.

**1789**
Little Lucie is born.

**JULY 14TH, 1789**

**AUGUST, 1789**
Declaration of the Rights of Man is written. Follows Voltaire’s ideas that man is noble by virtue, not birth. Proclaims sovereignty of the people and overturns previous legal precedent which allowed the King to make irreversible death sentences.

- Privileges of the Nobility are abolished.
- France is now under a constitutional monarchy.

**1789**
Declaration of the Rights of Man

**1791**
Constitution is drafted. Makes many changes in favor of a democracy rather than a monarchy.

- Louis XVI and his family, dressed up as bourgeois, try to escape France. The King is recognized at Varennes, accused of treason and arrested.

**1791**
French Constitution

**1774**
Charles tried for treason in England.

**1780**
Charles tried for treason in England.

**1788**
Declaration of the Rights of Man
1792

European monarchy is threatened. Austria’s emperor (Queen Marie-Antoinette’s father) and the King of Prussia attack France to restore the monarchy.

September 1792

September Massacres occur in Paris. 1500 prisoners killed in only a few days. Beginning of institutionalized violence in the Revolution.

- Victory of Valmy: revolutionary army wins the battle against Prussian enemy.

The Revolution triumphs. It is the end of the Constitutional monarchy and beginning of the First Republic.

1793

January 1793

Louis XVI is beheaded.

October 1793

Marie Antoinette is beheaded.

1794

June 1794

End of the Reign of Terror: Over 250,000 people were killed. A month later Robespierre is beheaded.

PUBLIC EXECUTIONS AT LA CONCORDE

Legend

A Tale of Two Cities

French Revolution
SECTION THE FOURTH

THEMES, IMAGES

AND

SYMBOLS

Patriotism and Treason
page 35

Dualism
page 36

Love and Sacrifice
page 38

Symbols and Images
page 40
French national anthem: "La Marseillaise"

Following France’s declaration of war on Austria and Prussia, the Mayor of Strasbourg asked an army engineer to write a marching song. On the night of April 25th 1792, the song was written and was later called by General François Mireur “The Marseillaise,” French for From Marseille. The song is called “The Marseillaise” because François Mireur was in Marseille (town in the south of France) when he organised a march of revolutionary volunteers in Paris. To this day, “La Marseillaise” remains the French national anthem.
In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the ideas of national pride and devotion to one's country appear regularly. The Defarges have such strong love for their country that they are willing to make sacrifices to assure that their country remains strong and that the Revolution is successful. Their perception of patriotism allows for no skepticism; they are steadfast in their beliefs and expect that others are as well. This love of country motivates the actions of the Revolutionaries and propels them through the story.

In *A Tale of Two Cities* treason is the opposite of patriotism. Treason is such a heavily weighted issue that it is possible to try someone for the statements they make, even in jest. Charles is tried for treason at the Old Bailey in England based on a joke he makes about the fame of the King of England. Treason appears again in France when Charles is arrested as an enemy to the revolution because he is an aristocrat. In this case, even heritage is considered an offence that endangers the state and the well-being of the Revolution.

It is interesting to note that in many cases, the definition of treason includes "overthrowing one's government," in which case, the ever patriotic Revolutionaries would be guilty of the very same crime they find so horrible. And, by the same token, many definitions of patriotism include the phrase "country of origin," meaning the country of one's birth. By that line of reasoning, by returning to his country to aid a friend in need, Charles is just as much patriot as a traitor.

Patriotism and treason are not nearly as black and white as the characters in the book believe. The same emotions and desires motivate the feelings that guide the characters through the story, but the context and circumstances place them in opposition.

**Challenge Question:**

What events from our own history have patriotic aspects? Which events have treasonous aspects? Are there events which from one point of view are patriotic and from another, treasonous? Explain.
The idea of dualism is based on an internalized battle between two elements that are opposing, yet inextricably linked. Dualism works on the principal that people are predestined to fit a certain mold, though they may struggle against it. In some ways, it can be viewed as an inner battle between one's potential to be "good" versus "evil."

In *A Tale of Two Cities*, this concept is addressed in a variety of ways. In the opening of the book, Dickens uses the lines "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness..." to express the dualistic nature of the times in England and France. While one city was flourishing on the heels of an industrial revolutions, the other city was spiraling into darkness under the boot of a political revolution. Even the title of the book *A Tale of Two Cities* suggests a comparison between two places that are linked through the telling of the story.

In terms of the Revolution itself, the dualistic nature is exposed through the actions and feelings of those characters immediately involved. The hope for a fair and just government created through anarchy and violence seems counter-productive but inevitable. While Madame Defarge feels an immense amount of national pride and desires to do good for her country, at the same time she ruthlessly condemns people to die and brings a terrible vengeance with her. Even the ideals behind the Revolution are dualistic in nature. Madame Defarge brings the same form of grief she experienced onto other families, but for her to feel her work is just, she must continue to seek revenge.
Sydney Carton battles his inner good and evil throughout the story. He tries to believe that he is a drunken good-for-nothing, but in reality he has a caring heart. His internal battle with his feelings and his self-esteem shape his actions throughout the course of the story. Carton's battle to find himself makes him a dynamic and appealing character because of the universal nature of his struggle.

The idea of personal dualism can also extend as a bridge between two people. Charles and Carton, for example, might represent the light and dark sides of the same man. Taking into account their nearly identical appearance and their love of Lucie, the two become similar beyond just their looks. However, it is Charles who wins happiness and Lucie’s love, and Carton who loses Lucie and spends his life without her. It is Charles who has the child to carry on his name and Carton who imagines it for himself. In their meetings together, Carton is drunken and sad, while Charles seems uplifted and sober, illustrating the dualistic quality between the two.

**CHALLENGE QUESTION:**

**How does the Dickens’ use of dualism effect readers’ perspectives on the story?**

**Does it change the way we view certain characters and events?**
In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens examines many kinds of love. The highest form of love in the world of the story is the love so strong that it gives people the strength to sacrifice their own desires and even lives for the good of the person or idea they love.

Dickens was writing to a primarily Christian audience, for whom the idea of self-sacrifice held particular resonance. The story of Christ's sacrifice of himself to cleanse the world of sin is the centerpoint of the Christian faith. The idea of sacrifice for love is held highest in the minds of his readers as well.

Madame Defarge's sister sacrificed herself and her brothers to keep her youngest sister safe from the Evrémonde family. The idea of keeping a secret even until death shows a great deal of compassion and strength. Madame Defarge's knowledge of that choice gives her strength to fight for a cause she deeply believes is just.

Lucie travels to Paris to be near Charles during his 18-month imprisonment at La Force. She leaves England with her daughter and father to be near the man she loves, and she shows her support by visiting the street outside Charles' cell for two hours everyday, rain or shine. Her sacrifice of time and energy gives Charles the will to continue hoping for release. Lucie makes these sacrifices for Charles out of a pure love for him and a love for the life they may one day have together. It is this love that gives Charles the strength to endure his long imprisonment and to survive in miserable conditions.
Jarvis Lorry devotes his time to helping the Manette family in their times of need, from helping Lucie bring Dr. Manette home to helping them find shelter in Paris during the Revolution. His unwavering loyalty to the family costs him great expense and personal safety, but his devotion to the family keeps him by their side. He proves to be a remarkable ally to the family and his love for them becomes evident as he cares for Lucie and Dr. Manette when they are about to lose hope.

Finally, there is Carton's ultimate sacrifice at the end of the story. Carton's love of Lucie and his delight in her happiness allow him to make the choice to die and feel confident that he has made the right decision. He talks throughout the story about his feelings of worthlessness and his lack of love and caring for anyone else, but he comes to realize that he is capable of a greater love than he had ever imagined. It fulfills him in a way previously unknown to him.

In addition to love leading to sacrifice, Dickens also presents sacrifice leading to a form of resurrection and redemption, another highly Christian idea. Dickens leads his readers to believe that through their sacrifices, the characters will be rewarded with not only an eternal remembrance, but also love and gratitude. In many ways, this makes their sacrifices more bearable, knowing the love they will always receive in return.

Before Carton dies, he tells of a son, named Sydney, who will live on with his name and receive the love of a family and of Lucie. It is through his sacrifice that he finds true happiness and self-acceptance.
SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

**Knitting:**
Madame DeFarge knits the names of enemies of the revolution into her work, using a special code. She is often discussed as one of the Three Fates, who weave, stretch, and cut the fibers of everyone's existence, with cold, uncaring precision. She represents the "sealing" of the fate of those involved. Their lives are forever knit into her violent pattern of death and vengeance.

**Footsteps:**
Often, Lucie is described as hearing far off footsteps, or footsteps outside her window. These footsteps foreshadow events to come, either immediately or in the more distant future.

**The Buzzing of Flies:**
In every courtroom scene, the noise of the crowd is described as the buzzing of blueflies. This represents the vulture-like nature of the crowd, looking for a verdict as flies look for rotten flesh to consume.

**Blood and Wine:**
In the story, they are often seen together. After the Marquis kills the child, he drops a bottle of wine on the ground, making it shatter. This foreshadows his own murder at the hands of those same peasants, and the blood that will be spilled in the Revolution. The Defarges run a wineshop that is a secret front for violent revolutionary actions. Their relationship to wine is not coincidental. The blood/wine relationship is also very relevant to the Christian faith in the act of communion and the symbolism of the wine as the blood of Christ.

**Lodestone Rock:**
Lodestone is a magnetic rock, most commonly found in France. Dickens uses this rock as a metaphor, as if it is pulling Charles back to France, even as he tries to ignore it. In the story everyone seems pulled to Paris as if by some unforeseen force which we attribute to the idea of the Lodestone.

**The Golden Thread:**
The title of one of the chapters in the book, also a direct reference to Lucie and how she binds the story together. Lucie is the link between all the plot lines, as well as the thread that runs through the life of Dr. Manette. His wife had hair of the same golden color, and Dr. Manette wore a piece of her hair wound around his finger under a bandage during his entire imprisonment in the Bastille. When he sees Lucie for the first time, he sees her golden hair and remembers the golden thread that has led him through life.
SECTION THE FIFTH

FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

Lesson Plan
page 43

LE BATAILLON SCOLAIRE,
Petit livre de morale, Collection Mignonne,
Ed. Pellerin, Epinal, no date

L’ÉCOLE BUSSONNIÈRE,
Petit livre de morale,
Collection Mignonne,
Ed. Pellerin, Epinal, no date
Students in the 19th century performing a play about the life of Dickens.

Notebook from the 1880’s

“Points” used to reward a good day’s work for students in the late 1800’s. Today, we receive similar prizes, such as stickers and stars.
Grade Level: 5-12  
Concept: Increase understanding and appreciation of *A Tale of Two Cities* through classroom discussion and drama activities.

Primary Subject: English  
Connection to other Subjects: Social Studies, Drama

State Goals Addressed:
State Goal 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras, and ideas  
State Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes  
State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations  
State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information  
State Goal 25: Know the language of the arts  
State Goal 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced  
State Goal 28: Use the target language to communicate within and beyond the classroom setting.

General Goals: Explore the idea of IDENTITY and CHARACTERS in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Anticipatory Set:

Students play **CHARACTER SCULPTING** as a way to free their minds to explore and play.  
Students form pairs. One student in each pair is the sculptor and the other the sculpture. The sculptor molds the sculpture by slowly pulling on imaginary strings covering the sculpture’s body. The sculptor cannot talk to the sculpture or make any physical contact. Encourage sculptors to be very specific – position of fingers, facial expression, hips, knees, and feet. The idea is to create a character caught in a moment -- What just happened? What is about to happen? After a few minutes, sculptures hold their poses and sculptors go on a “museum tour” of all the work that has been created in the room. The pairs then switch roles.

If your class has already read *A Tale of Two Cities*: Once they get the hang of it, students can create sculptures based on characters from the book. After each round of sculptures is created, ask the class to contribute their thoughts and impressions of what characters were created and ideas represented.

Big sculptures can also be created (i.e., one sculptor and three or four bodies to sculpt). Two sculptors can work on a sculpture at the same time taking turns. This can become a kind of dialogue between the two “artists.”

(Continued)
Students then create a **character bio**. If your students have read *A Tale of Two Cities* then they can work with characters from the novel. If not, students should create their own character — it can be based on something else you are reading or they can make their own. What's important is the level of detail and the exploration.

Ask students to choose a character. Most importantly, ask them to fall in love with their character, even if they're immoral, mean and low down.

The following questions/thoughts to ponder are just a beginning for your students. They should feel free to go off on tangents of their own. They should think and write from their character's point of view, allowing this to affect their language and their rhythm.

First they write a basic bio: Age, gender, heritage, siblings (any other family details), lover(s), astrological sign, etc.

Then the exploration becomes more in depth. Depending on how much room you have, you could ask the students to explore these things with their bodies and their pens.

How do you carry yourself?
Are you light or heavy (not literally, but grounder vs airy)?
Are your actions direct or indirect?
Are your actions quick or slow?
Is your energy bound or free?

What is your favorite time of day? Why?
What is your favorite food?
What's your income and how do you make it?
What are some of your goals in life?
If you found our you were going to die next week, how would you spend your last days?
Who do you admire? Why?
Do you like to exercise? If so, how?
Are you athletic? What sports do you like to play or wish you could play? Why?
How would you describe your taste in clothing?
How would your mother describe your taste in clothing?
Who is your closest friend?
What's one of your favorite movies?
Have you ever lied?
If you walk into a rectangular waiting room with several strangers, two chairs, a floor pillow and a large plant where, where do you choose to settle yourself?
Describe yourself to someone you've never met.

If there is time, allow students to share their characters with each other.

**Closure:**
Discuss the idea of stepping into someone else's shoes. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, many characters mask who they really are in order to attain something they need. Solicit responses to this. See if anyone in your class has had a similar experience. Explain they will be coming to Steppenwolf to see the show.
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