

# A tale of two cities redemption essay sample

[Life](#), [Death](#)



Redemption is real and can be possible in a lot of situations. This is the case in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, written by Charles Dickens. Throughout the novel, Dickens emphasizes his belief that redemption is a possibility, both on a human level and on the level of society. The type of redemption that lies beneath the story of the characters in the novel is how Dickens describes the years before and during the French Revolution, and gives light to a new future for France. The other type of redemption within the community of Dickens' characters is a type of salvation that makes the characters live better and more content lives in the end of the novel. Dickens' illustration of the near identical appearances of Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton lead each of their types of redemption to tie in with each other at the end of the novel. Throughout the novel, Darnay hides his identity of being blood-related to a well-known French aristocratic family. Once it is known by the French peasants that Darnay is a descendant of the Evremonde family, he is arrested in France where he was trying to help his friend Gabelle, and scheduled for death with the guillotine.

At the point of the novel where Darnay expresses his love for Lucie to Dr. Manette, he offers to reveal his true identity to Manette, but Manette dismisses him because he says that he trusts him. Carton is depicted as a careless drunk who cares for no one and is worthless. In the middle of the novel, Lucie asks him why he does not change. Carton responds with tears saying, " It is too late for that. I shall never be better than I am. I shall sink lower, and be worse" (Dickens, 137). This foreshadows the sacrificial death of Carton for Darnay and Lucy. His one significant act in the novel gives his life meaning and value in the sense that he laid down his life for others. He

becomes the savior of the novel, and gives hope for a better future for the ones he knew and for society. In “ Dickens and the Fiery Past: ‘ A Tale of Two Cities’ Reconsidered”, Robert Stange depicts Carton’s life as a “ parable of the French Revolution, of social regeneration through suffering and sacrifice” (Stange, 385).

Unlike Darnay and Carton, Dr. Manette experiences a recovery from the past. Dickens makes his theme of rebirth apparent at the very beginning of the novel because Book the First is titled “ Recalled to Life”, and deals with the resurrection of Dr. Manette after being imprisoned for eighteen years. Stange comments about this by saying, “ Dickens seems to have been obsessed by the notion of a prisoner buried alive, suddenly released to the light of every life, and having to re-form his connections with free men, to learn again the meaning of love and responsibility” (Stange, 383). Although Manette still has nightmarish thoughts about what he witnessed while imprisoned and about the letter he wrote, being home and seeing Lucie fall in love delights him. But Manette’s letter comes back around and hits him in the face when he discovers that Darnay is a successor of the Evremonde family. He feels that his life will again fall to pieces like it was in prison because he is concerned about how Lucie will feel about the death of Darnay.

However, the sacrifice Sydney Carton makes to save Darnay also makes amends for Dr. Manette being the reason why Darnay would have died, so Dr. Manette is ultimately redeemed. In what seems like a roller coaster journey through life for Manette, Stange says, “ The Doctor’s return to life

illustrates the stumbling course of the new order, released from its dark dungeon of oppression and misery, finding its place in a new and juster world” (Stange, 385). The fall of the French aristocracy as a result of the French Revolution sets up the change for the better for all of France.

Although the guillotine was a cruel and violent way to put aristocrats to death, it conveys the belief that this chaos of the revolution will ultimately lead to a morally upright society, rather than having secret societies between the French aristocrats and French peasants.

Sydney Carton refers to this peaceful “ future” city of Paris before his death on the guillotine, “ I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out” (Dickens, 351-352). This portrays that the suffering and struggles of France and Carton are parallel to each other. Carton sacrificed something very important, but so did France; it sacrificed the death of a long-lived regime, but only to come out with a society that will be stronger than it was before and be redeemed of the terrible era of the French Revolution. The theme of redemption in A Tale of Two Cities is highlighted by the characters of Charles Darnay, Sydney Carton, and Dr. Manette, as well as the gradual movement of France to become a stronger nation as a result of the French Revolution.

Darnay and Carton were destined by Dickens to be redeemed by each other. Dr. Manette’s life is redeemed twice after getting out of prison and when

Carton sacrifices himself for Darnay. The fall of the French regime as a result of the French Revolution sets up the change for France to come. Dickens, with his strong theme of redemption, shows that there can be rebirth on the human level as well as the level of society. The closing words of the book by Sydney Carton stresses Dickens' theme of redemption, " It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest I go to than I have ever known" (Dickens, 352).