

# Compare and contrast tale of two cities and the fr



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## ench Revolution comparison compare contrast essays Compare and Contrast Tale of Two Cities and the French Revolution

In the novel, *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, there are many references made by Dickens to the French Revolution. At times some of these references can be considered questionable. The references that I have researched include the storming of the Bastille, the guillotine and the aristocracy.

The Bastille was a fortress and state prison in Paris until its demolition which started in 1789. On July 14th, 1789, between eight and nine hundred Parisians, (mostly women) gathered in front of a medieval fortress, the Bastille. They were looking for weapons and gunpowder. They stormed the prison; 98 were killed, and 73 wounded. This was a *Jacquerie*. Although the Bastille contained no hope for weapons, the FALL OF BASTILLE served as a great symbol of the Revolution. When the storming of the Bastille occurred in the book, it was to get vengeance on the mercenaries whom had oppressed them, not to look for weapons and gun powder. Another difference is that there were seven newly liberated prisoners, and seven murdered men at the end of this gory siege. " Seven prisoners released, seven gory heads on pikes, the keys of the accursed fortress of the eight strong towers, some discovered letters and other memorials of prisoners of old time, long dead of broken hearts--such, and such-like, the loudly echoing footsteps of Saint Antoine escort through Paris streets in mid-July, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine." (1)

The guillotine was a method of death commonly used during the French revolution. The tumbrels were the transporters of the prisoners that were to be executed by the guillotine. " Six tumbrels carry the days wine to La Guillotine."(2) After a head was severed, it would fall into a waiting basket; this was true in the novel and in fact. " Crash!-A head is held up out of the basket." (3) The sharpness of the blade was also referred to in the novel. It was said that it is better to go in the morning when the blade was sharp, rather than after a large amount of people had gone, because of how dull the blade would be then.

When the revolution began all aristocrats thought it smart to flee the country. After fleeing the country the king and queen were put into prison. In Dec., Louis XIV was placed on trial for violating the rights of his subjects. On Jan 21st, 1793 he was carried through the crowd in a tumbrel and died by guillotine. The committee of public safety assumed leadership in April 1793. The queen was put to death soon after. The peasants sentenced all aristocrats to death. " To the Guillotine all Aristocrats." (4) Every aristocrat who entered the country was taken into custody; eventually tried and sentenced to death by the La Guillotine.

In conclusion, Charles Dickens portrayed many accurate facts in this novel. The guillotine was a feared method of death. The Aristocracy did leave the country for safety and every aristocrat in the country was eventually tried and executed. There were also some facts that were not exactly true.

Research shows that there were more deaths at the Bastille on the night of

July 14th than mentioned. As a result, while there are similarities, there are also definite contrast.