

# The idea of moderation in Charles Dickens' novel "A Tale of Two Cities"

[People](#), [Charles Dickens](#)



An inscription in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi said “ Nothing to Excess.” In today’s society, moderation is essential in order for a person to lead a meaningful life. If a person conducts their life without moderation in mind there will be extremely negative outcomes. This idea is very visible in society and in Charles Dickens’ novel A Tale of Two Cities.

In A Tale of Two Cities the author makes a social comment on the effects of excess in a society. The paradox of the first line of the novel is used to illustrate how nothing is either one way or the other. Nobody should have too much or little of one thing or emotion. Dickens wants to address the point that balance is key and that everything should be done with moderation in mind. One of Dickens’ characters in A Tale of Two Cities named Sydney Carton portrays this idea perfectly. Carton expresses his love for Lucie Manette. Later, Carton realizes that Lucie does not return his romantic feelings, but he still wishes to do everything in his power to make her happy. Carton later takes his own life in place of Lucie’s husband’s in order to make her happy.

Through this event, Dickens wishes to illustrate that even an excess of a beneficial emotion such as love will eventually become harmful. Carton had too much love for Lucie and therefore got killed trying to make her happy. Another character, Madame Defarge represents this idea of excess versus moderation. Madame Defarge’s family was brutally murdered by the Evremonde brothers. While this would be a logical reason to seek revenge, she took revenge many steps too far and set out to kill all the descendants of Evremonde and their families. Mrs. Defarge’s hatred blinded her into seeing

innocent people as guilty. Dickens strives to show how feelings of wanting revenge are natural in a situation like this, but excessive feelings of hatred can lead to an extremely dangerous outcome.

On the other hand, some may say that an excessive amount of a positive thing is beneficial. An article in The Huffington Post titled “ 6 Thoughts that Prove you can Never have too Much Kindness” discusses how a person can never perform too many acts of kindness. The author’s perspective is that the world will never have an excessive amount of such a beneficial thing like kindness. Similarly, an article from the Entrepreneur’s Yoda titled “ To Achieve Entrepreneurial Success, You can Never know too Much” discusses the idea of a person never being able to obtain too much knowledge. This article supports the popular idea that “ knowledge is power” and therefore it is impossible for an individual to know too much. While these articles make a point, even positive acts such as acts of kindness should be done in moderation. While kindness is clearly a positive thing, a person should think about themselves as well as others.

According to an article in Psychology Today, too many acts of kindness and generosity could be a “ sign of an overly submissive nature, or even as a symptom of mental illness.” (Simons) Acts of kindness should clearly be performed, but not to such an extent that a person ends up hurting themselves. Similarly, studies have shown that having too much knowledge about a certain topic can be a major disadvantage. An article in Elite Daily says that rather than benefiting a person, “ having too much information on a subject can curse a person into thinking they need to figure it all out before

they get started.” (Choi) A person with too much knowledge tends to overthink data which can lead to anxiety. For example, when my principal told people that our school had received a threat, I began to worry about the school’s safety and other facts that I would not have been worrying about had he not told us.

Overall, it is clear that a person should not perform any actions to an extent where they become excessive. Every person living in today’s society needs to learn to balance everything and never have an excess amount of one thing. Even having too much of a positive emotion such as love or kindness can lead to a dangerous situation. In life, a person should live by the words inscribed at the Temple of Apollo in order to live a happy, balanced life.