

Example of case study on "a tale of two cities"

[People, Charles Dickens](#)



Charles Dickens is one of the prominent literary figures of the Victorian era, and he was not just a critically acclaimed writer but also a profound social critic. His novels present to us an historic account of the predicament of the destitute and women in the nineteenth century English society. The theme of Dickens' works were influenced by many social events and issues such as the Clayton Tunnel Rail Crash, Debtor's Prison of Marshalsea and working conditions for child laborers in England. This essay aims at imploring one such event based on which Dickens wrote one of his most memorable novel to this day - " A Tale of Two Cities". The French Revolution, which took the entire France by storm, is the backdrop of this famous novel.

The French revolution is the socio-political uprising that took place in France, between the years 1789-1799. France had suffered a multitude of wars for 40 years leading up to this period, like the Seven years war fought on European soil and the American Independence war fought on the American continent. The French economy was crippled under the burden of these huge expenses incurred during the war, and the population explosion added fuel to the problem. France had a population close to 20 million at the dawn of the eighteenth century, which roughly equals 20 percent of the population of the entire Europe (leaving Russia) at that time. (Censer and Hunt, 2001) The brunt of this financial burden was borne by the common French people, who already had harbored a growing resentment towards the rule of King Louis XVI and on the ruling aristocracy.

The revolution began with the assault on the Bastille prison in July 1789, and subsequent events led to the formation of republic in the year 1792, followed by the execution of King Louis XVI in the year 1793. During the years 1793-

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94 (popularly known as Reign of Terror) almost 40, 000 people were beheaded in the guillotine. (Greer, 1935) The Directory, a body of five elected directors, held power between the years 1795 and 1799, and the revolution officially ended in 1799, when Napoleon Bonaparte put an end to the rule of the Directory by establishing his rule on France through a consulate.

On the surface, French Revolution may seem futile, because Napoleon in turn led a Government which was more a dictatorship rather than democracy, but the revolution did provide many fruitful results to the poor. The property laws and the taxation system became much more lenient, and the ruling powers did not dare overtax the common peasants ever again. Though it had its faults the revolution was the outburst of the pent up emotions of the oppressed. This is the essence of " A Tale of Two cities". Through the characters of Lucie Manette and Charles Darnay, Dickens implores the blood bath and the resultant anarchy caused by the revolution. On the other hand by narrating the plight of the peasants in the opening chapters leading up to the revolution, Dickens clearly captures the oppression suffered by the peasants in the hands of the Aristocrats.

Though the French Revolution concluded 13 years before the birth of Dickens, it had a significant influence, on his works mainly because of the effect the revolution had on the Eighteenth century European society. During the teen years of Charles Dickens, English society faced similar problems to the French, under the rule of George the Fourth. Dickens grew up in a politically charged up atmosphere and had suffered a lot because of the

various agitations that took place for issues such as the reformation of Parliament and the revoking the Corn Laws. (Pugh, 1908). Thus Dickens by narrating the events of the French revolution, tried to create awareness among his readers in English society, and hoped to bring some change. (Makati, 2008) Though Dickens empathizes with the poor people who took to arms against the injustices suffered by them, he does not approve of the violence the ensued the whole revolution, which is evident in his narration of the execution scene of Carton. Thus, " A Tale of Two Cities" proves that Dickens was not only a socially conscious writer but also an author who exposed the harsh realities of the French Revolution.

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