

# Roles reversed in a tale of two cities

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“ A Tale of Two Cities” by Charles Dicken's is a novel that is steep in great mystery. Dickens writes his characters not as solely good or bad. Each character is fleshed out as a real individual with faults. The doubling of the characters Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay is a central technique used by Dickens. In this case he not only pairs together opposites in values but makes them look exactly alike. Many people claim that Carton is the “ bad” one who has a great transformation and Darnay is the good one.

However, after examining the text of “ A Tale of Two Cities” it is clear that Darney is full of contradictions and Carton who is morally stable. Carton is a regular drinker and makes no claim otherwise. He is often seen drinking in the text or talking about drinking with a friend. He recounts stories and misadventures from bars. The narrator explains that he is always out late, he has been seen coming home in the early morning hours and he works for Stryver. The reader see Carton has someone how has many bad habits that have been going on for years and years.

Carton is also seen as not competitive or professional at all. Carton saves up all his energy and time to do the one task he has been destined to do – die a hero's death. He makes the decision to pretend like he is Darnay and take the death punishment for him. In comparison Darnay who is initially thought of as being the good guy is not what he seems to be. Darnay comes from a family who has a long history of being cruel to the French people. They have wrong people again and again for years. He wants to renounce his family name not out of good will but because it absolves him of any responsibility.

He pretends to be someone else when he married Lucie and deceives her for his own gain. Darnay chooses not to stay in Paris and fight for the people his family has wrong. He goes away and hides in London where he is safe from harm. Even at the end of the novel when Darnay should be put to death, he hides from his responsibility. He lets Carton be killed instead of him. Darnay and Carton act as foils to each other in Dickens' "A Tale of Two Cities". While Darnay is seen as heroic and Carton is seen as the exact opposite—nothing can be further from the truth.

Is Darnay that is ideal, irresponsible, and immature. Carton is created to be a stark contrast to Darnay. Carton grows into a man who in the end gives his life for the greater good of his family, friends, and society. This is something Darnay has never and will never be able to do. I agree with this criticism because I feel that there are many instances within the novel which support the idea that Darnay and Carton are not who they originally seem to be. For example Darnay says "If it ever becomes mine, it shall be put into some hands better qualified to free it slowly [...

] so that the miserable people who cannot leave it and who have been long wrung to the last point past endurance, may, in another generation, suffer less" (130). Darnay really does not want his family name. He wants to hide from the past and make it disappear. That is why he chooses to be someone he is not. I believe that the text shows that Darnay is idle and continues to do the same things over and over again. "the events of this week annihilated the immature plans of last week, and the events of the week following made all new again [...

] he had watched the times for a time of action, and that they had shifted and struggled until the time had gone by" (251). Unlike Carton who seems in the beginning to be idle and is "rumoured to be seen at broad day, going home stealthily to his lodgings, like a dissipated cat" (90). However, in the end it is Carton who dies for what he believes to be right and states "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." (374) .