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Subject: English-tale of two cities Tale by HAROLD BURWELL In the fictitious novel Tale of Two Cities, the author, Charles Dickens, lays out a brilliant plot. Charles Dickens was born in England on February 7, 1812 near the south coast. His family moved to London when he was ten years old and quickly went into debt. To help support himself, Charles went to work at a blacking warehouse when he was twelve. His father was soon imprisoned for debt and shortly thereafter the rest of the family split apart. Charles continued to work at the blacking warehouse even after his father inherited some money and got out of prison. When he was thirteen, Dickens went back to school for two years. He later learned shorthand and became a freelance court reporter. He started out as a journalist at the age of twenty and later wrote his first novel, The Pickwick Papers. He went on to write many other novels, including Tale of Two Cities in 1859. Tale of Two Cities takes place in France and England during the troubled times of the French Revolution. There are travels by the characters between the countries, but most of the action takes place in Paris, France. The wine shop in Paris is the hot spot for the French revolutionists, mostly because the wine shop owner, Ernest Defarge, and his wife, Madame Defarge, are key leaders and officials of the revolution. Action in the book is scattered out in many places; such as the Bastille, Tellson's Bank, the home of the Manettes, and largely, the streets of Paris. These places help to introduce many characters into the plot. One of the main characters, Madame Therese Defarge, is a major antagonist who seeks revenge, being a key revolutionist. She is very stubborn and unforgiving in her cunning scheme of revenge on the Evermonde family.

Throughout the story, she knits shrouds for the intended victims of the revolution. Charles Darnay, one of whom Mrs. Defarge is seeking revenge, is constantly being put on the stand and wants no part of his own lineage. He is a languid protagonist and has a tendency to get arrested and must be bailed out several times during the story. Dr. Alexander Manette, a veteran prisoner of the Bastille and moderate protagonist, cannot escape the memory of being held and sometimes relapses to cobbling shoes. Dr. Manette is somewhat redundant as a character in the novel, but plays a very significant part in the plot. Dr. Manette's daughter, Lucie Manette, a positive protagonist, is loved by many and marries Charles Darnay. She is a quiet, emotional person and a subtle protagonist in the novel. One who never forgot his love for Lucie, the protagonist Sydney Carton changed predominately during the course of the novel. Sydney, a look-alike of Charles Darnay, was introduced as a frustrated, immature alcoholic, but in the end, made the ultimate sacrifice for a good friend. These and other characters help to weave an interesting and dramatic plot. Dr. Manette has just been released from the Bastille, and Lucie, eager to meet her father whom she thought was dead, goes with Mr. Jarvis Lorry to bring him back to England. Dr. Manette is in an insane state from his long prison stay and does nothing but cobble shoes, although he is finally persuaded to go to England. Several years later, Lucie, Dr. Manette, and Mr. Lorry are witnesses at the trial of Charles Darnay. Darnay, earning his living as a tutor, frequently travels between England and France and is accused of treason in his home country of France. He is saved from being prosecuted by Sydney Carton, who a witness confuses for Darnay, thus not making the case positive. Darnay ended up being acquitted for his presumed crime. Darnay and Carton both

fall in love with Lucie and want to marry her. Carton, an alcoholic at the time, realizes that a relationship with Lucie is impossible, but he still tells her that he loves her and would do anything for her. Darnay and Lucie marry each other on the premises of the two promises between Dr. Manette and Darnay. Right after the marriage, while the newlyweds are on their honeymoon, Dr. Manette has a relapse and cobbles shoes for nine days straight. France's citizens arm themselves for a revolution and, led by the Defarges, start the revolution by raiding the Bastille. Shortly before the start of the revolution, the Marquis runs over a child in the streets of Paris. He is assassinated soon after by Gaspard, the child's father, who is also a part of the revolution. Three years later, right in the middle of the revolution, Darnay is called to France to help Gabelle, an old friend. As soon as he goes down what seems to be a one-way street to France, he is arrested (in France) for being an enemy of the state. Dr. Manette, Lucie, and the Darnay's daughter go shortly after to Paris to see if they can be of any help to Charles. When the delayed trial finally takes place, Dr. Manette, who is in the people's favor, uses his influence to free Charles.

The same day, Charles is rearrested on charges set forth by the Defarges and one other mystery person. The next day, at a trial that had absolutely no delay, Charles is convicted and sentenced to death. Because of the despondent situation, Dr. Manette has a relapse and cobbles shoes. Sydney Carton overhears plot to kill Lucie, her daughter, and Dr. Manette and has them immediately get ready to leave the country. Carton, having spy contacts, gets into the prison in which Darnay is being held, drugs him and switches places with him. Lucie, Charles, and their daughter

successfully leave the country. Sydney Carton, making the ultimate sacrifice, partly for Lucie, goes to the guillotine in place of Charles. Just before he dies, Carton has a vision in which society is greatly improved and the Darnays have a son named after him. This dramatic plot revolves around several central themes. One theme involves revenge. One's bad side is brought out by the evil effects of revenge. Madame Defarge is the main subject of this implicit theme. She turns into a killing machine because she must get revenge. An example of this is when she finds out Charles Darnay is an Evermonde and is going to marry Lucie Manette. She knits Darnay's name into the death register. Another key theme in the novel has to do with courage and sacrifice. There were many sacrifices in this novel by many different characters. The ultimate sacrifice was made by Sydney Carton. Because of his love for Lucie and his friendship with Darnay, Carton is the example of one of the most important themes implied in this book. Carton helps others, and does not think so much of himself. Right before going to the guillotine, Carton sees a better world, a world where he gave to others, not thinking of himself. These themes help outline an interesting story.

Tale of Two Cities is a very long and detailed historical novel. It is my opinion that the major strength of this book was the suspense and drama involved to keep the reader hooked. There are always incidents to keep the reader thinking, "what's going to happen now?" For example, I as a reader wondered, "Will Dr. Manette ever get back to his old self?"; "What will happen to Charles Darnay?"; and so on. A major weakness of this book, in my opinion, was the fact that it was so very long and had a somewhat advanced vocabulary. Tale of Two Cities was almost 400 pages long and took

quite a bit of thinking on the reader's part to understand. The novel used such words as "capricious"; "coquette"; "tergiversation"; and "acquiesced", among others, which I included on my vocabulary list. I will admit, this writing does enhance one's terminology greatly, but these words are not used in everyday speech. It is good to read literary classics, however, Dickens Tale of Two Cities would not be one of my favorites.