

Linguistics - structure and meaning in literary discourse



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Linguistics - Structure and Meaning in Literary Discourse: In a profound understanding of the structure and meaning of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, it is fundamental to comprehend the relationship between the several subplots and the overall structure of the novel.

Linguistic and Literary Issues

Issue 1: One of the major characteristics of the structure of *A Tale of Two Cities* is the novelist's skillful use of coincidence and densely interconnected subplots.

Issue 2: In literary discourse, there is close relation between structure and meaning, and the structure of *A Tale of Two Cities* reveals the meaning of the novel.

Issue 3: The subplots of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* are closely related with the themes and this relation contributes to the overall meaning of the novel.

Issue 4: The relationship between the different subplots and the structure in *A Tale of Two Cities* divulges the underlying meaning of the novel which in turn contributes to the popularity and universality of the novel.

Discussion of the Linguistic and Literary Issues in *A Tale of Two Cities*

A major characteristic of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens is the tightly unified subplots of the novel. Throughout the novel, the novelist has been careful in adroitly interlinking the different subplots. The novel mainly deals with two parallel plots: the love relation between Charles Darnay and Lucy Manette and the historical events connected with French Revolution.

However, there are several other underlying subplots distributed throughout the three Books of the novel. They include the story of the great sacrifice by the good-for-nothing lawyer Sydney Carton, the comparison between the two
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cities of London and Paris, the atrocities of the aristocrats etc along with the stories within story such as the imprisonment of Dr. Manette, the story of Madame Defarge. The overall setting of the novel is based on these interconnected subplots which contribute to the each other as well as to the meaning of the novel in general. The novelist has been effective in presenting the major themes of the novel through the literary device of setting. It means that the setting of the novel which incorporates the interrelated subplots functions as a literary device to the novelist in his ultimate conveyance of the major themes. Therefore, the subplots in *A Tale of Two Cities* work in relation to each other to reveal the major themes of the novel. In other words, different subplots and the structure of the novel has significant role in the transference of the themes and meaning. As George Newlin establishes, “ The success of *A Tale of Two Cities* ... can be attributed to Dickens’s artful setting of a touching human story against the background of the world-shaking events of the French Revolution, and to its powerful, universal themes.” (Newlin, 1) There is pertinent relation between the setting and the meaning in *A Tale of Two Cities* and the novelist proficiently selects the subplots which contribute eventually to his literary goal. Therefore, subplots in the novel cannot be comprehended in isolation. Rather, they are deeply contrived so as to provide an overall meaning to the novel. “ What Dickens is ultimately concerned with in *A Tale of Two Cities* is not a particular historical event—that is simply his chosen dramatic setting—but rather the relationship between history and evil...” (Alter, 16) In short, the subplots in *A Tale of Two Cities* are closely connected with the overall structure of the novel, which together contribute to the meaning in general.

Works Cited

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Alter, Robert. "The Demons of History in Dickens's Tale." Harold Bloom. (Ed) Charles Dickens's a Tale of Two Cities. New York: Chelsea House. 1987. P 16.

Newlin, George. Understanding A Tale of Two Cities: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents. Westport: Greenwood Press. 1998. P 1.