

A Tale of Two Cities

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✓ Verified Book of A Tale of Two Cities

## Summary:

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"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"

The story is set in the late 18th century against the background of the French Revolution. Although Dickens borrowed from Thomas Carlyle's history, *The French Revolution*, for his sprawling tale of London and revolutionary Paris, the novel offers more drama than accuracy.

The scenes of large-scale mob violence are especially vivid, if superficial in historical understanding. The complex plot involves Sydney Carton's sacrifice of his own life on behalf of his friends Charles Darnay and Lucie Manette. While political events drive the story, Dickens takes a decidedly antipolitical tone, lambasting both aristocratic tyranny and revolutionary excess--the latter memorably caricatured in Madame Defarge, who knits beside the guillotine.

When former aristocrat Charles Darnay learns that an old family servant needs his help, he abandons his safe haven in England and returns to Paris. But once there, the Revolutionary authorities arrest him not for anything he has done, but for his rich family's crimes. Also in danger: his wife, Lucie, their young daughter, and her aged father, who have followed him across the Channel.

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