

## ***A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens**

The book *A Tale of Two Cities* was first published in the year 1859 describing the French revolution which took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This book resembles Thomas Carlyle's book featuring two cities, Paris and London. The tale by Charles Dickens is about a young seventeen year old girl, Lucie Manette, who is brought to Paris by Mr. Jarvis Lorry in search of her father, Dr. Alexandre Manette, who is released after 18 years of imprisonment in Bastille.

Their journey starts in the Paris suburb known as Saint Antoine where her father is supposedly kept. A couple called the Defarges, being secret revolutionaries and owners of a wine shop, take them to her father who they housed after his discharge. Monsieur Defarge used to work for Dr. Manette before his imprisonment; ironically, Dr. Manette, Lucie's father is now under the care of his former servant. The author depicts Dr. Manette as a person who is still suffering the trauma of his imprisonment and seems to be withdrawn. The eighteen years spent in jail have taken a toll on him making him quite reserved; his only pastime is making shoes which he learned how to mend during those long 18 years of imprisonment. He stares at his daughter who he barely recognises. But thanks to Lucie's devotedness and love to her father, her father gets recovered.

Lucie takes her father back home with Lorry's help. She falls in love with Charles Darnay. They later get married and give birth to a daughter who later dies in the height of the revolution which sends Charles back to Paris to rescue a family servant who has been held captive by the revolutionaries. He, however, does not succeed and gets

caught by the revolutionaries. Charles finds himself facing a trial being accused of crimes his family allegedly committed.

The plot gets complex when a man called Sydney Carton, who strikingly resembles Charles, decides to get sentenced instead of Charles on his behalf. Sydney has a secret love for Lucie and probably does this to spare her the heartache of losing her husband. In a swift flow of events, Lucie and Charles manage to escape from France to England while Sydney Carton was hanged. His death is a heroic act to save his secret love, Lucie Manette, and her husband Charles Darnay.

The story is driven by politics and it is interesting how Charles Dickens takes an anti-political side. He criticises tyranny and ends up ridiculing the revolution. The book remains in one's memory for its famous lines "it was the best of times and it was the worst of times" (Dickens 267) as well as Carton's words once he said before he goes to guillotine, "it is far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done" (Dickens 699). Lucie and Charles are later blessed with a son who they name after Sydney Carton to show their appreciation to their dear friend who gave up his life to sacrifice their lives, family and love.

## Works Cited

Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.