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Teaching A Tale of Two Cities

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At one of our many meetings held this past year where curriculum was developed, we learned that the one freshman literature book available however, that studying *A Tale of Two Cities* as the anthology presents it, is a less than satisfying experience for both me and for my students. As a teacher interested in having my students get as much possible from reading such a classic, I chose my topic in order to enhance the novel's teachability and its rewards. I also chose this particular novel because I love the book and have wanted for a number of years to increase my knowledge of it and of its background.

Many questions about *A Tale of Two Cities* have surfaced in my teaching the novel questions which I think need answering. What, for example, did historians or philosophers during the latter part of the eighteenth century think of the French Revolution? What did Dickens, himself a Victorian, think of it sixty years after it had occurred? What have critics—Victorian as well as modern—said about the novel? And finally, what are the best ways to teach such a novel to students who may be reluctant to read any extended prose work? I will address these questions in my project.

Edmund Burke (1729-97), the Irish philosopher and public figure, is a man worth looking at because of his extensive treatment of the uprising in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). According to Samuel Johnson, Burke devoted his life to five causes: "the preservation of the English Constitution, the emancipation of Ireland, the emancipation of the American Colonies, the protection of the people of India from the misgovernment of the East India Company, and opposition to the ravages of the French Revolution." ¹ Burke, however, was not only opposed to the "ravages of the French Revolution," he was opposed to the Revolution *per se*. His *Reflections*, which began as a correspondence between Burke and a Parisian gentleman, was later expanded into a treatise but retained the letter form he had begun with his French friend. Burke plainly saw the French Revolution as unnecessary. He wrote:

Were all these dreadful things necessary? Were they the inevitable results of the desperate struggle of determined patriots, compelled to wade through blood and tumult, to the quiet shore of a tranquil and prosperous liberty? No! nothing like it. The fresh ruins of France, which shock our feelings wherever we can turn our eyes, are not the devastation of civil war; they are the sad but instructive monuments of rash and ignorant counsel in time of profound peace. They are the display of inconsiderate and presumptuous, because unresisted and irresistible authority. The persons who have thus squandered away the precious treasure of their crimes, the persons who have made this prodigal and wild waste of public evils (the last stake reserved for the ultimate ransom of the state) have met in their progress with little, or rather with no opposition at all. Their whole march was more like a

triumphal procession than the progress of a war. Their pioneers have gone before them, and demolished and laid every thing level at their feet. Not one drop of *their* blood have they shed in the cause of the country they have ruined. They have made no sacrifices to their projects of greater consequence than their shoe-buckles, whilst they were imprisoning their king, murdering their fellow citizens, and bathing in tears, and plunging in poverty and distress, thousands of worthy men and worthy families. Their cruelty has not even been the base result of fear. It has been the effect of their sense of perfect safety, in authorizing treasons, robberies, rapes, assassinations, slaughters, and burnings throughout their harassed land. ²

Burke argued that the form of government instituted after the revolution was not a democracy, as Frenchmen were fond of calling it, but a “mischievous and ignoble oligarchy.” He agreed with the ancients that an absolute democracy, like an absolute monarchy, is a legitimate form of government. But he cautioned that in a democracy, “the majority of the citizens is capable of exercising the most cruel oppressions upon the minority, whenever strong divisions prevail in that kind of polity, as they often must; and that oppression of the minority will extend to far greater numbers, and will be carried on with much greater fury, than can almost ever be apprehended from the dominion of a single scepter.” ³ Even under a cruel leader, he contended, the poor have other poor people to help assuage their wounds; in a democracy, they are deserted by others because they have become “overpowered by a conspiracy of their whole species.” Burke agreed that the French government had needed reform, but he questioned why the ‘Whole fabric should be at once pulled down, and the area cleared for the erection of a theoretic experiment edifice in its place.” ⁴ Furthermore, the monarchy only *appeared* bad. As to the “all-atoning name” of liberty, Burke saw precious little of it when traveling in France. Instead, he saw an “oppressive degrading servitude. Forming a new government was, in Burke’s view, a rather easy undertaking, as was giving freedom; but forming a free government was a task no one in France could achieve.

But had the Revolution achieved any good? Burke agreed that “among an infinite number of acts of violence and folly, some good may have been done. They who destroy every thing certainly will remove some grievance.” ⁵ The king, he argued, could have accomplished, or was intending to accomplish, the same things.

Edmund Burke, then, surely objected to the ravages of the revolution, but he condemned equally those who incited the revolt against the French monarchy. To him, the revolution was an attack on the settled institutions of society which he considered to be the only basis and guarantee of human liberty.

I do not expect all of my students to read Burke—he is perhaps a little too heavy for them. I do want them to see, however, that there is more than one side to any historical event. I may read a passage or two to my students, or, better yet, I may send a few of the more interested students to do a little research on their own. If they are captivated by Burke’s prose, I may steer them to Paul Fussell’s *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism*, an excellent book analyzing Burke’s use of imagery and his rhetoric. Fussell says, for example, that in Burke’s *Reflections*, certain passages are “so gorgeous, the effect so commandingly contrived, the issues so central to the conduct of human life” that they “deserved to be excerpted, bound in limp black leather, and appointed to be read in churches on Sundays.” ⁶

Thomas Paine (1737-1809), the author of *Common Sense*, who did much to inspire the American Revolution, summarily answered Burke’s condemnation of the French Revolution. In a treatise entitled *The Rights of Man*, which was sent to President George Washington, Paine complained that Burke’s treatise was filled with “flagrant misrepresentations,” and “that while it is an outrageous abuse on the French Revolution, and the principles of Liberty, it is an imposition on the rest of the world.” ⁷ Implying that Burke was fearful that England and France would cease to be enemies, Paine maintained that Burke had written his treatise because “there

are men in all countries who get their living by war” and who “make it their study to sow discord, and cultivate prejudices between nations.” ⁸

Paine condemned Burke’s treatise of nearly four hundred pages as being filled with almost every abusive epithet found in the English language. However, his own railing at Burke is also forcefully worded. For example:

Hitherto Mr. Burke has been mistaken and disappointed in the opinions he had formed of the affairs of France; but such is the ingenuity of his hope, or the malignancy of his despair, that it furnished him with new pretenses to go on. There was a time when it was impossible to make Mr. Burke believe there would be any revolution in France. His opinion then was, that the French had neither spirit to undertake it, nor fortitude to support it; and now that there is one, he seeks an escape by condemning it. ⁹

Burke, according to Paine, made no distinction between *men* and *principles*. Because of this, Burke was unable to see that the revolt took place against the despotism of principles rather than the despotism of the king. Even though Louis XVI was a moderate, according to Paine, he nevertheless did nothing to change the tyrannies of the former reigns; it was this and other despotisms—the monarchy, parliament, church, ministerial policies in general, and feudalism itself—that precipitated the revolt. Finally, when the Bastille was taken, says Paine, its downfall “included the idea of the downfall to despotism; and this compounded image was become as figuratively united as Bunyan’s Doubting Castle and Giant Despair.” ¹⁰

Paine is a joy to read. His prose is clear, and his invective cuts like a double-edged sword. He is *fun* to read, too; I may even read my class this excerpt, which I am sure students will enjoy:

Mr. Burke, who does not call himself a madman, whatever other people may do, has libeled, in the most unprovoked manner, and in the grossest style of the most vulgar abuse, the whole representative authority of France; and yet Mr. Burke takes his seat in the British House of Commons!

From his violence and his grief, his silence on some points, and his excess on others, it is difficult not to believe that Mr. Burke is sorry, extremely sorry, that arbitrary power, the power of the Pope, and the Bastille, are pulled down.

Not one glance of compassion, not one commiserating reflection, that I can find throughout his book, has he bestowed on those who lingered out the most wretched of lives, a life without hope, in the most miserable of prisons.

It is painful to behold a man employing his talents to corrupt himself. Nature has been kinder to Mr. Burke than he is to her. He is not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird.

Accustomed to kiss the aristocratical hand that hath purloined him from himself, he degenerates into a composition of art, and the genuine soul of nature forsakes him. His hero or his heroine must be a tragedyvictim expiring in show, and not the real prisoner of mystery, sinking into death in the silence of a dungeon. ¹¹

The students may ask at this point, “With whom—Burke or Paine—does Charles Dickens himself agree?” They will be able to answer this question after delving into the novel and reading closely Chapter VII, “Monseigneur in Town,” of the *Tale*. In this chapter the Monseigneur, here used to personify the French aristocracy, is about to drink his chocolate. Dickens writes:

Monseigneur could swallow a great many things with ease, and was by some few sullen minds supposed to be rapidly swallowing France; but his morning's chocolate could not so much as get into the throat of Monseigneur, without the aid of four strong men besides the Cook.

Yes. It took four men, all four ablaze with gorgeous decoration, and the Chief of them unable to exist with fewer than two gold watches in his pocket, emulative of the noble and chaste fashion set by Monseigneur, to conduct the happy chocolate to Monseigneur's lips. One lackey carried the chocolate pot into the sacred presence; a second milled and frothed the chocolate with the little instrument he bore for that function; a third presented the favored napkin; a fourth—he of the two gold watches—poured the chocolate out. It was impossible for Monseigneur to dispense with one of these attendants . . . he must have died of two. ¹²

In the same chapter Monsieur the Marquis, who also personifies the pampered aristocracy who is one of the truly despicable characters in the novel, heartlessly runs down a child and considers the accident a mere inconvenience to him and a hazard to his horses. Students are quick to understand the Marquis's total lack of compassion when Dickens has the aristocrat say:

"It is extraordinary to me," said he, "that you people cannot take care of yourselves and your children. One or the other of you is forever in the way. How do I know what injury you have done my horses? See! Give him that." (p. 498)

The Marquis thinks that magnanimously tossing a gold coin to the grieving father more than compensates for his dead child. Even the more unsophisticated student will grasp this heartless gesture of the Marquis and the unfeeling attitude of the aristocracy toward the downtrodden masses. From there, it is a short step to their understanding that Dickens's attitudes towards the Revolution are closer to Paine's than they are to Burke's.

At this point students should be introduced to Thomas Carlyle. That Carlyle was a friend and admirer of Dickens is shown in this short anecdote: When Dickens asked Carlyle for some material on the French Revolution, Carlyle actually sent two cartloads from the London Library! In fact, Dickens thanked Carlyle in the preface of his novel; the novelist supposedly used many details from Carlyle's history, *The French Revolution*. The better students in the class might be directed to a few chapters or so of Carlyle's history. For example, the storming of the Bastille is particularly interesting. Carlyle writes,

And so it lashes and it roars. Cholat the wine-merchant has become an impromptu cannoneer Let conflagration rage; of whatsoever is combustible! Guard-rooms are burnt, Invalides mess-rooms Straw is burnt; three cartloads of it, hauled thither, go up in white smoke: almost to the choking of Patriotism itself How the great Bastille clock ticks (inaudible) in its Inner Court there, at its ease, hour after hour; as if nothing special, for it or the world, were passing! It tolled One when the firing began; and is now pointing towards Five, and still the firing slakes not.—Far down, in their vaults, the seven Prisoners hear muffled din as of earthquakes; their Turnkeys answer vaguely For four hours now has the World-Bedlam roared: call it the World-Chimaera, blowing fire! . . . the Bastille is fallen! *Victoire! La Bastille est prise!*¹³

The students should then compare Dickens's account of the storming. He writes:

Deep ditches, double drawbridge, massive stone walls, eight great towers, cannon, muskets, fire, and smoke. Through the fire and through the smoke—in the fire and in the smoke, for the sea cast him up against a cannon, and on the instant he became a cannoneer—Defarge of the wine shop worked like a manful soldier, two fierce hours . . . grown doubly hot by the service of four fierce hours. A white flag from within the fortress, and a

parley—suddenly the sea rose and swept Defarge of the wine shop over the lowered drawbridge, past the massive stone outer walls, in among the eight great towers surrendered! (pp. 530-1)

Students should be able to see the resemblance of the two authors in tone, as well as in subject matter.

Then, too, students might see the similarities between the Manettes' flight from Paris and Carlyle's account of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette's near-escape from the revolutionaries. Carlyle writes:

The eyes of the Villagers look enlightened, as such eyes do when a coach-transit, which is an event, occurs for them. Strolling Dragoons respectfully, so fine are the yellow liveries, bring hand to helmet; and a Lady in gypsy-hat responds with a grace peculiar to her. That Lady in slouched gypsy-hat, though sitting back in carriage, does she not resemble some one we have seen, some time;—at the Feast of Pikes, or elsewhere? And this *Grosse-Tete* in round hat and peruke, which, looking rearward, pokes itself out from time to time, methinks there are features in it—? Quick, *Sieur Guillaume*, Clerk of the *Directoire*, bring me a new Assignat! Drouet scans the new Assignat; compares the Paper-money Picture with the Gross Head in round hat there: by Day and Night! you might say the one was an attempted Engraving of the other. And this march of Toops; this sauntering and whispering,—I see it!

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If students read Carlyle closely, they will quickly see that Dickens not only borrowed a few cartloads of materials from Carlyle, but he adopted much of his social philosophy, tone, and subject matter as well.

As mentioned earlier, for years now I have wondered how critics viewed *A Tale of Two Cities*; and in doing some research on the critics of Dickens, I found as many who condemned the novel as praised it. For example, when *Tale* was published in 1859, it was scarcely noticed by the reviewers, according to Professor Michael Wolff, "but, where noticed, almost universally scorned." ¹⁵ And James Fitzjames Stephens (?), in an unsigned review in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, *Saturday* called the novel "melodramatic, pretentious, and above all, deadly dull." ¹⁶ G. K. Chesterton thought that Dickens entirely missed the intellectual side of the French Revolution. Finally, Louis Cazamian had some scathing comments on Dickens the writer, and many of these apply to Dickens' *Tale*. He wrote:

His faults in taste and in style, the failings of his intuitive verve, are obvious; his literary individuality lacks polish. He sacrifices balance for the sake of intense effects; his expression obeys monotonous habits; he repeats himself to excess. His pathos is cheap or exaggerated; his imagination in its continual effort to emphasize the character of things tends rather to distort them; his vision, fond of agitated outlines, is apt to lose the very sense of repose . . . At every turn in his stories, we come upon the favourable or unfavourable opinions of the author—a kind of sentimental commentary on his own work; and these instances of bias, intensified by polemical preferences and arguments, too often bore or annoy the reader. ¹⁷

Yet even Chesterton added that in terms of dignity and eloquence, *Two Cities* "almost stands alone among the books by Dickens." ¹⁸ And notwithstanding Dickens's faults, Cazamian feels that Dickens is "the most national, the most typical, and the greatest [author] of them all." ¹⁹ Wilkie Collins, whose play *The Frozen Deep* is alluded to in Dickens's preface to the novel, called *Two Cities* Dickens's "most perfect work of constructive art," ²⁰ and Dickens himself wrote: "I hope it is the best story I have written." ²¹ However, it is the book itself which is the main concern here—not its sources, not what others thought about it, and not even what Dickens himself thought of it. The real question remains: Can the book succeed with inner-city students who may be reluctant to read such a classic?

I firmly believe it can, depending on the approach. I recently came across, quite by accident, a New Haven curriculum guide published in the summer of 1970.²² Although the guide's approach to the novel is somewhat general, it nevertheless has some good points for teaching a book like *A Tale of Two Cities*. It is a low-keyed approach, one purporting to develop confidence in students who dislike or mistrust novels as a genre. I have included the approach in the following pages, and I suggest strongly that each teacher modify or expand it as he/she sees fit. (The third part of the approach, "Narration," is given as an example below.)

In this approach, the teacher is encouraged to become a "book pimp," using any device that might attract a reluctant reader. In this case, perhaps a vivid description of the guillotine might be a good attention-getter or pimping device for the students. In *Outlooks* we find a fairly comprehensive description of the guillotine, but it comes too late in the book to interest the students much. Before beginning the book, then, students might read or be read the following:

Dr. Joseph I. Guillotin, a surgeon and a member of the Revolutionary Assembly, proposed in 1789 that persons condemned to death be executed swiftly and mercifully by a beheading machine, which thereafter came to bear his name. Before the revolution only French nobles had the privilege of being decapitated for capital crimes; common people were hanged, broken on the wheel, burned at the stake, or tortured to death on the rack. Guillotin sought a quick, painless, uniform method of execution to be used democratically for all condemned persons, regardless of rank The victim was strapped to a board and then laid horizontally on a table, which extended at right angles from the base of the upright posts. His neck was confined in a round opening between two planks, the upper one of which could be raised and then lowered. Since the falling blade would cover the round opening, the head would be severed from the body. In front of the opening was an oblong trough or basket to receive the head, and on the right of the table was a large wicker-work basket to receive the body Between August 10, 1792 and July 31, 1794, approximately 20,000 persons were executed. Though no longer used for political terrorism, the guillotine remains today the legal *method of execution in France*. (*Outlooks*, p. 550)

The approach mentioned above gives five "handles"—terms used, I imagine, for devices whereby students may gain a feeling of control and of mastery of the text in question. The first handle is entitled "Data," and the teacher should encourage students to write in their notebooks, after having read the first chapter, their answers to the following:

1. When?
2. Where?
3. What time?
4. Who?
5. Who speaks?
6. Who listens?
7. Who does what?
8. Why?

One good feature about the Outlooks edition is that the first chapter, "The Period," is left almost intact. This is the famous chapter beginning, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Several other school editions of the novel have omitted it entire! At any rate, the questions above are so basic that any one will be able to answer them and feel he has mastered much of the material, even if he actually has not.

At this point, perhaps, some general background information about the revolution can be given the students. I think the approach may vary, for we know that lecturing might be fine for some students, but doing research in the library might be better for others. I firmly believe, though, that students should have the information before they get very far in the novel.

For the interested teacher, an excellent background introduction to the novel can be found in the abridged version of *Two Cities* edited by Youngham.²³ The introduction is complete—covering biographical sketches of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, court life during the Old Regime, the extravagance of the King's house, the King's levée, Versailles, the dress of the period, the people of France, the three estates, taxes, the Bastille, Louis's attempt at reform, the guillotine, and the Reign of Terror. A sample which would interest students follows:

Can you imagine yourself as a fashionable young man or woman living at the time of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette? As a gentleman of those days, you would have worn a triangular cocked hat on your powdered hair, which would be tied back with a black ribbon. Your coat, of satin, possibly striped in light blue and pink, would be open to disclose an elaborate waistcoat and knee-length breeches of pale yellow, trimmed with pink bindings and blue buttons. Your long white silk stockings, embroidered with blue clocks and fastened by blue garters, would show to advantage your well-shaped leg, for you would make a sorry figure in the minuet if your legs did not measure up to the current idea of manly good looks. In addition, as a well-dressed gentleman of fashion, you would wear silver buckles on your black shoes, a ring on your finger, and you would carry a handsome jewelled or enameled snuffbox which would be used with exaggeratedly graceful gestures as you flirted back your long, ruffled lace cuffs.

As a lady of the late eighteenth century, your dress would be elaborate and heavy in contrast to the delicacy of the gentleman's costume. The material of stiff brocade would be fashioned into a long whale-boned waist, beneath which would billow a skirt with panniers or heavy folds looped over the hips. Down the front would show a petticoat trimmed with lace, velvet bows, and artificial flowers. Most characteristic of the period, however, would be the mountainous headdress which you, as a lady in keeping with the times, would wear. Coiffures varied from one to three feet in height, and were so intricate in design that they could not often be taken down or combed.

Students also would enjoy seeing paintings and drawings showing the strange costumes of the period. Several excellent books are given in the bibliography section of this paper. Showing the costumes on the opaque projector would really interest the students. Perhaps, too, bringing to class a plastic back-scratcher might be a good idea, for the original back-scratcher was used, not for the back, but for the perukes which sometimes reached a height of six feet and which would become verminous between trips to the hairdresser!

The second handle in the approach is entitled "Character," a crucial part in teaching Dickens. Indeed, as one critic writes, "To think of Dickens is first of all to remember the great characters."²⁴ I have found that students have no trouble remembering Madam Defarge—in fact, many think she is the novel's protagonist—or Sydney Carton. To be sure, these characters are drawn so that we do remember them, and it pleases me and the students when, at the end of the school year, they still remember the names covered back in September or October. I have found that one way to insure that everyone will have a good chance to remember the

characters is to make the students write in their notebooks the names of any new characters as they appear in the novel. It might be useful, also, to include the scenes in which there appears to be any kind of character change, for change is important if we later want to teach the difference between the static and dynamic characters. As a device to aid students' understanding of character, the teacher might indicate the following points for students to remember when working with character:

1. What the character says about others.
2. What the character says about himself.
3. What other people say about him.
4. What he has done before.
5. What he thinks.
6. What he does.
7. How he does it.

While it is true that in English literature, Dickens probably is second only to Shakespeare in the number of memorable characters created, students do have trouble remembering some others from *Tale*.²⁵ There are undoubtedly good reasons for this. Jerry Cruncher, for example, is not very memorable, although students find his secondary occupation an interesting one. But before we think Dickens did a shoddy piece of writing with this humorous character, we must remember that with *Tale*, Dickens was experimenting a bit. He actually tried to subdue his typical comic extravagances and even his dialogue. In a letter to his friend, John Forster, Dickens wrote that his new novel was a "picturesque story, rising in every chapter with characters true to nature, but whom t should express, more than they should express themselves, by dialogue."²⁶ Plot, then, at least as far as this novel is concerned, is primary. In spite of this, however, I hope that students will be able to see for themselves how insipid Lucie and Charles Darnay are.

The third handle in the above approach is "Narration," intended also to clear a student's perspective on how the story is told. Here the student should be told to look for the following:

1. The story just happening.
2. A character telling the story.
3. A hero-character telling the story.
5. A combination of any of the above.

Earlier in the paper I mentioned that teachers should modify or expand these “handles.” My modification might look like this:

1. Read the first paragraph in Book I, Chapter III, “The Night Shadows” (pp. 454-6), and answer the following questions:
 - a. Who is the “I” in this paragraph? Is it Dickens or the narrator?
 - b. What does the “I” mean when he says, “A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other”?
 - c. Why does Dickens begin his chapter in the first person and then switch to the third person in the second paragraph?
2. Read the third paragraph, column B, of Chapter IV, “The Preparation” (p. 461), and answer the following:
 - a. Why is this paragraph in parentheses?
 - b. Why does Dickens say that Mr. Lorry’s reflection was “breathless”?
 - c. Why would a narrator want us, the readers, to know what is in Mr. Lorry’s mind at this point?
 - d. Is the paragraph in question really necessary? What would be lost without it?
3. Read the last two sentences of Chapter XVIII, “Echoing Footsteps” p. 533), and answer the following:
 - a. Who is hoping that the footsteps of Saint Antoine never enter Lucie Darnay’s life?
 - b. What does the above tell us about the narrator?
 - c. What does the above tell us about Dickens?

As teachers we should be able to elicit correct responses concerning the sometimes fine line between the narrator and the author. Students will probably argue that the line is always a fine one, but we must remember that their reading has been scanty at best. Moreover, many read for plot alone. They have not yet learned to appreciate the finer points. For a more in-depth coverage of the narrator in literature, see Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* .

The fourth handle, “Plot,” comes only after students have read into the book and feel comfortable with the facts. The teacher could ask them to do the following:

1. Strip plot to essential details.
2. Indicate what they have eliminated from the novel.
3. Indicate what elements they would add first if they were reconstructing the novel.
4. When, if at any time, did they have a tip-off that something was going to happen? (See below for the element of foreshadowing.)
5. How logical“ was the chain of events?
6. What seemed real to them?
7. How do they test for reality in a book?

After that, one might go on to describe different kinds of plots and to talk about sequence and chronology. Students should have a good time with this, since there is a flashback near the end of the novel, taking the students back to 1767, eighteen years prior to the beginning of the novel! At this point in the approach the students should be ready to embellish the action with details, and the teacher should ask them for alternative actions and alternative details.

The most interesting handle, at least for some students, might be the fifth handle, “Setting.” I can already see them doing well, especially with the second chapter, “The Mail,” where Jerry Cruncher meets Mr. Lorry on the Dover road. The following series of questions should be placed on the board:

1. Where?
2. What does it look like?
3. What does it smell like?
4. What would you touch there?
5. When did it last rain?
6. How hot or cold is it?
7. Are the characters sweating or shivering?
8. How does it sound at night?
9. What would you see if you walked around the place?
10. If you were a detective, what would you notice?
11. Would you like to visit or live there?

From there, the students may move on to talk of atmosphere, very often controlled by setting. These questions might prove helpful:

1. What makes atmosphere?
2. How does one describe it?
3. What do you know? *versus* What do you feel?
4. What kinds of details are important to know?
5. What is physical? *versus* What is psychological?

With the above “handles,” I feel that almost everyone placed in the average or above-average tracks in the high schools could grasp the riches being offered by Dickens. Certainly, the slower and reluctant reader would approach the novel with less loathing and intrepidation at such bulk. Moreover, we know that *Two Cities* was written in installments and since the chapters are very often short and suspenseful, many students will want to continue to read.

There are a few techniques or activities which might enhance student appreciation of the novel. One good exercise might be having the students guess where each installment ended as Dickens wrote it. Any standard edition will tell where the original installment ended. Another activity is an occasional oral reading of a particular chapter or scene. Students can always increase their oral reading skills this way, and most of them enjoy it. Also, because Dickens was such an avid theatre buff, a few of his chapters can be read play-fashion. Chapter Six, “The Shoemaker,” is one that particularly lends itself to dramatic reading. This past year, for example, playing the part of Dr. Manette, I pulled out from around my neck a small locket made from string and paper, in which were several strands of blond hair. Gimmicks such as these are “scorny,” as students are fond of pointing out, but I believe they are appreciated at the same time. Furthermore, I will sometimes read an entire chapter to students. They love it as a change from the worksheet and discussion blues. Also, students might wish to adapt a scene they have read into a dramatic presentation.

Something I would like to try next year is to have students make a list of all the foreshadowing elements found in the novel, but they may need a little help at first. Foreshadowing is a technique that every student should master when studying *Tale*, for Dickens uses the technique to perfection. The teacher knows that these clues relate to coming events and will recognize them before the students. For this reason, the students will have to be guided as they read the novel. In Chapter VII of Book I, for example, Gaspard’s child is killed by the Marquis’s carriage; and in Chapter VIII, Dickens says that the carriage “might have been lighter.” After reading the eighth chapter, the teacher should have the students explain the significance of the line. And in Chapter IX, as the Marquis is awaiting Charles’ arrival, he thinks he hears someone outside his window. The reader is not told anything other than that the servant finds no one there lurking about. Finally, when the Marquis is murdered in Chapter X, the students will understand all the clues given earlier. The puzzle finally fits, and no one should have trouble with the plausibility of the actions. The students will enjoy finding examples of foreshadowing after they have been given a little help, and many of them will want to race ahead to see what will happen. The students will want to explain, later in the novel, the significance of the rainstorm in Soho,

Darnay's mention of the English prisoner in the London Tower, Miss Pross's strength when she first appears in the novel, Jerry's penchant for funerals, and so on. All of these incidents relate to coming events; the teacher would do well to remind the students about the importance of the incidents as they are first encountered.

Next year, too, I plan to impose upon the good graces of the Yale Film Library to lend us *Two Cities*. Because I like students to make lists of things, we will undoubtedly list the differences between the book and the movie, or we may list the differences between what we pictured from the book and what we actually saw in the movie. These lists, of course, provide good outlines for future compositions, too.

I am rather satisfied with the edition of *Two Cities* in *Outlooks* for the majority of my students, but this year I had a class that could have handled, with possibly a few exceptions, an unabridged version. I might add that an excellent unabridged school edition is published by Macmillan Company. It includes a fair introduction, vocabulary definitions at the bottom of pages, and questions of fact and writer's craft at the back of the book. Another reason I would like to use an unabridged edition for some classes is that in *Outlooks* some important information is left out. For example, an entire chapter is omitted where Stryver, an important foil to Carton, foolishly believes that Lucie would enthusiastically accept his proposal of marriage. Humorous incidents such as these are already too few in *Two Cities* to have them omitted willy-nilly! In addition, Lucie's first-born son, who dies from a childhood disease, is omitted in *Outlooks*. But the best argument by far for reading the unabridged classic is that very often an editor will omit valuable description. I heartily agree with one critic who wrote:

Description, with Dickens, is more than a means; very often it is an end in itself. It contributes to the general effect, but with such varied and powerful resources at its command that it subordinates the other elements of the narrative to itself.²⁷

I will be ordering a set of the unabridged version of *Tale* for those teachers who feel that their classes might be able to handle them. These books will be made available at the Hall of Graduate Studies.

Next school year should prove rather interesting as far as teaching *A Tale of Two Cities* is concerned. I can hardly wait to begin; for not only have—I learned much that will be helpful to me in teaching the novel, but I also feel that other teachers may benefit from my research and pass this knowledge on to their students as well.

Notes

1. Johnson's remarks are quoted in the biographical sketch of Burke in the introduction to *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published together with Thomas Paine's reply, *The Rights of Man* (New York: Doubleday Dolphin, 1961), p. 3. Subsequent citations are from this text.
2. Burke, pp. 51-2.
3. Burke, p. 139.
4. Burke, p. 141.
5. Burke, p. 264.
6. Paul Fussell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p.

- 225.
7. Paine, p. 270.
 8. Paine, p. 271.
 9. Paine, p. 275.
 10. Paine, p. 289.
 11. Paine, p. 288.
 12. Robert C. Pooley, ed. *Outlooks Through Literature* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1964), pp. 495-6. Subsequent citations of Tale are from this text.
 13. Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History* (New York: The Heritage Press, 1956), pp. 130-2.
 14. Ernest Bernbaum, *Anthology of Romanticism* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), p. 1053.
 15. Philip Collins, *Dickens: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 12.
 16. Collins, p. 409.
 17. Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian, *A History of English Literature* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 1168.
 18. Edward Wagenknecht, *Introduction to A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Random House, The Modern Library, 1950), p. xii.
 19. Cazamian, p. 1173.
 20. Collins, p. 421.
 21. Collins, p. 421.
 22. The guide was supervised by Raymond Lemley, former Supervisor of English/Libraries; other names connected with the project are Emma Ruff, now principal at Hillhouse; Charles Shepard, present director of Title VII at Hillhouse; and Maureen Howard, presently at Cross. If the reader wants further details about the curriculum, I am sure these people may be contacted.
 23. Edith Carol Youngham, *Introduction to A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950), p. xv.
 24. Martin Price, ed., *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 2.
 25. Collins, p. 7.
 26. K J. Fielding, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1958), p. 163.
 27. Cazamian, p. 1171.

Student Bibliography

Beik, Paul H., ed. *The French Revolution*. New York: Walker and Company, 1970. Documents by influential Frenchmen, arranged chronologically from November 19, 1787, to March, 1799. Excellent 12-page chronology at book's end.

Carlyle, Thomas. *The French Revolution: A History*. New York: The Heritage Press, 1956. Students might benefit from finger through this book. Illustrations are interesting, and the chronological summary is helpful.

Davenport, Millia. *The Book of Costume*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1948. Black-and-white photographs of objects and paintings used to show dress worn in eighteenth-century France. Pp. 652-722 are useful.

Lauer, James. *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1969. Truly fascinating account of the fashions before, during, and after the French Revolution. In color. Famous paintings are used to show modes of dress. Pp. 126-153 especially helpful.

Yarwood, Doreen. *European Costumes; 4000 Years of Fashion*. London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1975. Drawings used to show modes of dress. Not as good as the Lauer book, but it has fair coverage of Europe's fashion during the eighteenth century. Pp. 177-213 are useful.

Youngham, Edith Carol, ed. *Dickens', A Tale of Two Cities*, abridged version. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1950. Has excellent background of eighteenth-century Paris. Students should enjoy this.

Teacher Bibliography

Allen, Walter. *The English Novel: A Short Critical History*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1954. Too short on Dickens to be of much help.

Bernbaum, Ernest, ed. *Anthology of Romanticism*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948. May be useful for teachers wanting to review some of Carlyle's major writings.

———. *Guide through the Romantic Movement*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949. Chapter Eighteen about Carlyle is especially good.

Booth, Wayne, C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961. Chapter Six, "Types of Narration" is a must for teachers who teach point of view.

Burke, Edmund and Paine, Thomas. *Reflections on the Revolution in France and The Rights of Man*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961. Most helpful book.

Carlyle, Thomas. *The French Revolution: A History*. New York: The Heritage Press, 1956. Chronological summary at book's end is especially helpful for the teacher who wants an unbiased account of events.

Collins, Philip, ed. *Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. London: The Chaucer Press, 1971. Good for learning what critics from 1859 to present have said about Dickens.

Evans, B. Ifor. *A Short History of English Literature* . Baltimore, Md., Penguin Books, 1940. Brief and not especially helpful panorama of English literature from *Beowulf* to Joyce.

Fielding, K. J. *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction* . New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1958. Chapter Ten is especially good concerning the background of Dickens and *Tale* .

Foner, Philip S., ed. *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* . New York: The Citadel Press, 1945. For the teacher who wants to read more than *The Rights of Man*.

Fussell, Paul. *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism* . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965. Excellent book for the teacher wanting an in-depth analysis of Burke's use of imagery and his rhetoric.

Goldberg, Michael. *Carlyle and Dickens* . Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1972. Chapter Seven is excellent analysis of *Tale* and Carlyle's *The French Revolution* .

Holmes, Mabel Dodge, ed. Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* , abridged version. New York: Globe Book Company, 1941.

Karl, Frederick R. *A Reader's Guide to the Nineteenth-Century British Novel* . New York: The Noonday Press, 1964. Chapter Five gives excellent overview of Dickens, but dismisses *Tale* in few sentences.

Legouis, Emile and Cazamian, Louis. *A History of English Literature* . New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927. Interesting, though general and outdated, criticism of Dickens. Cazamian, covering the years 1660-1914, is a bit trying—his sweeping generalizations sometime stagger the mind.

Miller, J. Hillis. Charles Dickens: *The World of His Novels* . Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965. Interesting reading for the teacher of Dickens, but not necessarily for *Tale* .

———. *The Form of Victorian Fiction* . Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968. Short on Dickens, but term "omniscient author" as Victorians saw it, is described.

Pooley, Robert C., et al. *Outlooks through Literature* . Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1964. Freshman text in which abridged version of *Tale* is found.

Price, Martin. *To the Palace of Wisdom* . New York: Doubleday, 1964. Not very helpful book on Burke's writing.

Reeves, Ruth E. *Ideas for Teaching English: Grades 7-8-9* . Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966. Indispensable guide for teaching literature and grammar. Especially good motivating devices found here.

Smith, Dora V., et al. ed. Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* , School Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961. Has a few pictures from the Ronald Colman motion picture.

Wagenknecht, Edward ed. Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* . New York: Random House,

The Modern Library 1950. Probably best book for a critical introduction to Dickens and the novel.

Youngham, Edith Carol ed. Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* , abridged version. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1950. Introductory background is excellent; students will enjoy reading this, too. Has nice silhouettes for students to copy for bulletin boards.

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