



A TALE OF TWO CITIES BY CHARLES DICKENS

Historical Romance

Age 14+

Profound, sad, enriching

Doctor Alexandre Manette, a man imprisoned unjustly in France, is freed and reunited with his daughter, Lucie, who brings him to live with her in England. She falls in love with an aristocrat's son living under the alias of Charles Darnay who has been accused of plotting against England; after he is acquitted, she marries him. But dissolute Sydney Carton, one of the lawyers who helped defend Darnay, is secretly in love with Lucie, and when the French Revolution touches her world, Carton must take action to save her and, in doing so, give his life meaning.

I loved the characters, particularly Sydney Carton, and the themes of redemption and forgiveness. Dickens made it clear through his characterization of the revolutionaries that, while their actions were wrong, they were acting out of desperation and were treated unfairly. At the same time, he emphasized that not all aristocrats were cruel and that nurture, not family lineage, makes a bad person. I especially loved the character arc of Sydney Carton; in my opinion, it was the best part of the book.

There is almost nothing I disliked about this book, other than the writing style. While I appreciate beautiful historical prose, it was difficult to read through the long descriptions of scenery, objects, and buildings. The beginning is also hard to understand, as Dickens uses a lot of indirect references to the characters in the scene; a reader needs to be wide-awake and fully paying attention to keep track of all of the details in such parts.

Anyone who likes classic novels, especially the novels of Charles Dickens, would like this book; I would also suggest this book to history buffs who would enjoy reading about the French Revolution.

Even though this book is only about 385 pages, it will feel much longer, because it is so dense. However, it is all worth it because of the soaring, idealistic ending.

At first, I thought this book was a tedious slog, but then I began to get into the world more and grow more attached to the characters; at that point, I started to *really* like it! You have to be patient with this book— read closely; look up the allusions when they appear; digest it one or two chapters at a time. The characters are so well-written, and the story fits in perfectly with the historical setting; the ideas that Dickens has about human morality, group behavior, and what makes one's life meaningful are deep and important. In all, if you feel comfortable with comprehending 19th-century prose and you want to be edified, this book will be an immense gift to your soul, as it was to mine!

