UNIT 10: CHARLES DICKENS: *TALE OF TWO CITIES* (PART II)

UNIT STRUCTURE:

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- discuss Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities* in detail
- identify the important themes of the novel and explain them
- assess Dickens' art of characterisation
- explain Dickens' narrative style as seen in the novel in question

10.2 INTRODUCTION

The novel *Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens was published in both serial and book form in 1859. Carlyle's *The French Revolution* casts its shadows on this novel, which is set in London and Paris at the same time during the French Revolution. It is a novel that depicts the plight of the French peasantry and workers brutalised by the French aristocracy that led to the Revolution, but the brutality demonstrated by the revolutionaries toward the former aristocrats in the early years of the Revolution managed to gain equal attention from the novelist. The very title of the novel suggests the importance of the two cities– Paris and London for Dickens to deal with the harrowing story of

suffering and denial of justice for those at the receiving end aftermath of the French Revolution. You will feel that Charles Dickens in this novel provides the compelling juxtaposition of the parallel yet at the same time the contrasting worlds of the two cities. The following sections and subsections will offer an assessment of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* with particular emphasis on its story, themes, characterisation, narrative technique and critical reception accorded to both the author and the novel.

10.3 READING THE NOVEL

Contemporary reviews of the novel did not consider *A Tale of Two Cities* as a warning that revolution was at all possible in 19th century England. But critics in subsequent times have debated at length whether Dickens intended the novel to have implications for his own society. Around 1930s, the Marxist critic T. A. Jackson argued that the novel exclusively showed Dickens's belief that the revolutionaries were justified in using violence, cruelty, and revenge to overcome their oppression. More recent critics are still bewildered to find out Dickens himself was a revolutionary or not. Some opine that Sydney Carton is a middle class hero whose personal sacrifice indicates that the novel does not provide any political solution. But according to critic Cates Baldridge there is a "subversive subtext to the narrator's middle class horror at the collectivist Revolutionary ideology," and argues that Dickens may actually prefer the community of the Revolutionaries to the isolation of the middle class bourgeoisie life.

Criticism in the 20th century also paid more attention to this novel, concentrating on its psychological portraits and its status as historical fiction. Some critics even denied that the novel can be called a historical novel at all because of its one-sided portrayal of the French aristocracy before the Revolution. Even Bernard Shaw argued that the novel is 'pure sentimental melodrama from beginning to end, and shockingly wanting in any philosophy of history.' The historian Georg Lukacs voices the frequently heard criticism that the novel fails to connect the personal

adventures of the characters with the Revolutionary background, as he says: "Dickens, by giving prominence to the purely moral aspects of causes and effects, weakens the connection between the problems of the characters' lives and the events of the French Revolution." In his famous biography of Dickens, Edgar Johnson finds that "instead of merging, the truth of revolution and the truth of sacrifice are made to appear in conflict."

10.4 MAJOR THEMES

The following are some of the important themes of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Theme of Resurrection or Regeneration:

The idea of resurrection or regeneration is one that effectively functions as a unifying device for *A Tale of Two Cities* at several levels. From an ironic perspective Jerry Cruncher is termed a "Resurrection-Man" (a body snatcher), a "noble tradesman" who robs churchyards to provide cadavers to medical professionals. It is introduced in the first book itself through the phrase "recalled to life". At one level it has a narrative function in that the plot depends on two of the major characters (Doctor Manette and Charkes Darnay) being rescued from incarceration and the guillotine respectively. In Book One Chapter V the reader is introduced to Doctor Manette who has spent a long period of his life in confinement in the Bastille. His experience has alienated him to such an extent from the outside world that he begins to regard his isolation itself as a natural refuge. His former servant, Ernest Defarge, acts as his caretaker after his release and the Doctor spends his time in the former's garret making shoes, an art he had learnt in order to break the monotony of his life in prison. He creates, therefore, an alternate reality in the garret where even his daughter, Lucie, cannot enter. In fact, partially letting go of his memory becomes an unconscious strategy that he adopts in order to escape from the hard facts of reality. It is only gradually that Lucie is able to bring him completely back to life after his 'recall'. At the same time, this resurrection is rendered precarious since

the peace, calm and security of his imaginary but ideal life earlier cannot ever be fully recreated in real life, especially in the turbulent times that Dickens portrays. Consequently, we see the Doctor suffering from a relapse in Book Three Chapter XII after he fails to convince the Defarges to use their influence to release his son-in-law Charles Darnay. Doctor Manette feels especially guilty since it is his own prison journal that has led to the re-imprisonment of and the death sentence for Charles. This chapter is aptly titled “Darkness” in this context since it signifies a return to the darkness of unreason. At the same time, the restoration of Doctor Manette earlier in the novel implies the restoration of Lucie to a family and a vast improvement to her relatively more marginalised status as an orphan. Again, Lucie herself is to be an agent of restoration for her father, as is advised by Jarvis Lorry in Book One Chapter IV, asking her to “to restore him to life, love, duty, rest, comfort”.

Apart from Dr Manette, the ‘resurrection’ of Charles Darnay forms another crucial part of the narrative framework. Book Two Chapter III prefigures the more crucial rescue of Darnay towards the end of the novel. In this chapter, it is Sydney Carton whose likeness to him results in his acquittal from the charge of being a spy and saves him from being executed. Darnay is (again) sentenced to death in Book Three Chapter X and even here the denouement of the novel rests on Sydney Carton’s exchanging places with him in prison. Darnay is thus ‘recalled to life’ through the agency of Carton.

However, it is in the character of Carton that the fuller, more religious and metaphorical aspect of resurrection is embodied. This is because of the associations established by the author between Christ and Carton (which is discussed later). Carton, at the beginning of the novel, is projected as someone who has lost interest in living a ‘fruitful’ life and so is not ambitious at all. In this, he is diametrically opposite to Stryver who is extremely (and sometimes obsessively) devoted to the goal of success in life. However, paradoxically, while Carton seems to adopt a life-denying attitude regarding himself, he is more interested and active with reference to others (such as to Charles and Lucie). This

willingness to be of use to others becomes crucial later in the novel. Moreover, the fact that his death will mean a certain kind of 'rebirth' for Darnay and also provide newer hope for his family (primarily Lucie and her son) becomes at one level reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice. This also indicates the emergence of Carton as someone who has shed his earlier personality and has embraced life. With his frequent mood swings, Carton seems to be a character divided within himself who constantly strives to reconcile the different and conflicting, aspects of his personality. The conflicts within him are frequently the result of his self not attaining that ideal that Carton visualises. As Dickens seems to visualise, this ideal is of course modelled on the image of Christ. Towards the end of the novel the speculation that this might be actualised is given some emphasis. Again, this theme is brought into perspective through a network of Biblical images throughout the novel. For instance, in Book Three Chapter VIII, Sydney Carton fills his glass with brandy, pours it on the hearth, and watches it as it drop. This action gains a symbolic force through the association of wine with the blood of Jesus. Moreover, it goes back to Book One Chapter V where a cask of red wine spills on a Paris street, prefiguring the blood that is eventually going to stain the streets. The related idea here is of martyrdom, with Christ as the epitome of sacrifice and renunciation of the self. This is the reason why Carton has an epiphanic remembrance of Christ's words etching into his memory at his father's funeral as he strolls through the Paris streets at night after putting into action his plan to save Darnay in Book Three Chapter IX. As he is taken to the Guillotine (Book Three Chapter XV), Carton attains a transcendent state of mind that is articulated through his prophetic vision. This seems to resonate with the reiteration of Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life" that precedes this vision. Not surprisingly, then, the ideal visualised by Carton at the end looks ahead at the emergence of a newer generation of 'men' (since this vision is nevertheless centred on Lucie's *son* and Carton's namesake) who would abjure the violence and aggression of the earlier generation and build for a more peaceful and tolerant world.

Portrayal of Women:

Another important theme pertains to the portrayal of women in this novel. Critics like Lisa Robson point out that despite the breakdown of traditional gender distinctions, Dickens succumbs ultimately to the power relationship involved in the issue of gender. One such instance is the description of the French aristocracy in terms of the Medusa, "the Gorgon's head", whose corruption and brutality actually created the circumstances for the Revolution (Book Two Chapter IX). At the same time, the guillotine (the counterpart of the Gorgon's head) is feminised as "one hideous figure [which] grew as familiar as if it had been before the general gaze from the foundations of the world—the figure of the sharp female called La Guillotine" (Book Three Chapter IV). It is a powerful and triumphant mythical deity (as it is sarcastically portrayed) which overpowers and instils fear and superstition in the people. In both cases, however, the women of France become living embodiments of the negative aspects of revolutionary activity, even though they rely on the men to actually carry out the actions envisaged by them. The character of Madame Defarge becomes a prototype of the 'monstrous' woman who repudiates her femininity in favour of political power and a public life.

The novel, however, ultimately denies women's moral and intellectual capacity to perform public roles. The killing of Madame Defarge symbolises this: it is presented as an act of retribution carried out through the hands of another seemingly unfeminine woman, Miss Pross. In the framework of the novel, the fate of Madame Defarge is determined by a patriarchal utopian vision where such unfeminine and dysfunctional women will cease to exist. The issue of gender here associates itself with the question of class through the fact that Madame Defarge is a peasant woman who is therefore already marginalised.

In contrast, the character of Lucie Manette conforms to the image of the angel of the hearth that proved to be so popular in much of 19th century literature, especially that written by men. Lucie belongs to the middle class and so is expected to perform the role of an administering angel both for her immediate family and the larger circle of family friends, particularly Sydney Carton. She is passive and vulnerable and therefore

elicits in the men who make her acquaintance the impulse to protect her. In Book Two Chapter IV, with reference to her impact on Dr Manette, she becomes "the golden thread that united him to a Past beyond his misery, and to a Present beyond his misery: and the sound of her voice, the light of her face, the touch of her hand, had a strong beneficial influence with him almost always." Again in Chapter XXI of the same book she is seen as "the golden thread which bound her husband, and her father, and herself, and her old directress and companion, in a life of quiet bliss". And in the concluding vision of Carton Lucie is elevated to the status of a Mary-like figure: "I see Her with a child upon her bosom, who bears my name." The use of knitting and weaving tropes by both Lucie and Madame Defarge serve to accentuate the distinctions held up between the two representatives of 19th century womanhood. In Lucie, the image celebrates her genteel domesticity within the traditional bounds of the patriarchal family with the woman as the moral centre. On the other hand, Madame Defarge's obsessive knitting becomes one of the media of communication in the revolution and comes closer to the Greek Fates with their inexorable power that wrenches her from the confines of middle-class family values.

In contrast to both these women characters, the figure of Miss Pross combines their character traits that complicate the picture further. In contrast to the idealised married feminine figure of Lucie, Miss Pross is not good-looking and has to work for her living. Her social position is inferior to Lucie's and she occupies an indeterminate space in the family structure of the Manettes – a position that is akin to the position of a governess. She is strong, independent and unmarried and by implication, therefore, less creative than Lucie. In this she approaches Madame Defarge who is entirely remote from the idea of regeneration. Miss Pross, however, comes closer to the conventional self-sacrificing and nurturing female figure by her unselfish acts (as a surrogate mother) for the safety of Lucy and her child. As her proximity to the feminine ideal becomes greater, Miss Pross becomes the agent through whom Madame Defarge will encounter her punishment. Thus, women become a medium through

which the subversive forces of the revolution are sought to be contained in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The Theme of Doubling:

The theme of doubling is also central to the novel. This happens first of all in the manner in which the identities and ways of life of the two cities of London and Paris, two of the most populous cities in the world during the 18th and 19th centuries, are juxtaposed with each other. This is initiated in the opening chapter itself through powerful sarcasm of latent anarchy and fear in England and France in 1775:

"There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever...France, less favoured on the whole as to matters spiritual than her sister of the shield and trident, rolled with exceeding smoothness down hill, making paper money and spending it. Under the guidance of her Christian pastors, she entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards. It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees, when that sufferer was put to death, already marked by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a certain movable framework with a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts, bespattered with rustic mire, snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently, and no one heard them as they went about with muffled tread: the rather, for as much as to entertain any suspicion that they were awake, was to be atheistical and

traitorous…In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting. Daring burglaries by armed men, and highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night...prisoners in London gaols fought battles with their turnkeys, and the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses in among them, loaded with rounds of shot and ball; thieves snipped off diamond crosses from the necks of noble lords at Court drawing-rooms; musketeers went into St. Giles's, to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, and the musketeers fired on the mob, and nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way." (Book One, Chapter 1)

The sinister and unpredictable nature of the mob is to be found in equal measure in both cities; however, it is Paris which subsequently becomes London's other as the French mob embarks on a violent revolution. Bjørn Tysdahl in his essay **"Europe is not the Other": *A Tale of Two Cities*** focuses more on the resemblances between the two cities rather than on their contrasts and sees this framework as being guided by what he terms "the grammar of comparison". This narrative strategy, for Tysdahl, is instrumental in creating networks for the circulation of the comedy of the novel [Tysdahl in Bloom (Ed.): 150]. It also gives, he argues, "greater depth and power to indirect political commentary, not least that which examines the price paid in England for early capitalism" [Tysdahl in Bloom(Ed.): 151]. There are parallels and contrasts set up with respect to the characters as well, as has been discussed earlier in the sections on 'resurrection' and on women, for instance, between Sydney Carton, Mr. Stryver and Charles Darney, and between Lucie Manette, Miss Pross and Madame Defarge.



LET US KNOW

In his Preface to the First Edition of *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) Dickens lauds Thomas Carlyle for his massive documentation of the French Revolution in his book *The French Revolution: A History* but Dickens goes on to validate the originality of his own version:

"Whenever any reference (however slight) is made here to the condition of the French people before or during the Revolution, it is truly made on the faith of the most trustworthy witnesses. It has been one of my hopes to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book."

Nonetheless, Dickens did ask for Carlyle for advice and was overwhelmed by the amount of research the historian had done for his book. There are several characters, places, events, etc. in common between the two authors. For example, the image of the knitting women in Paris; the crowd of Saint Antoine; the Governor of the Bastille and his execution by the mob; and the stoical and, at times, welcoming stance towards death exhibited by Carlyle's Marie-Jeanne Philipon and Dickens's Sydney Carton.

Use of Memory:

An allied theme to the use of history in the novel is its addressing of memory and reminiscence as it revisits events happening approximately seventy years ago. Since it is cast in the form of historical fiction, it engages with the manner in which collective or cultural memory is built out of individual remembrances. This brings up the inherent constructedness of memory itself, a factor that renders it suspect and more of a trap. This can be seen in the way Madame Defarge remembers the atrocities of the French aristocrats and refuses to acknowledge the exceptions in the present. At the same time, memory can also be healing, as when Doctor Manette's memory of his dead wife, seen in his daughter's face, leads to his process of resurrection from the grave of his prison and madness. Again, it is Charles Darnay's memories of his mother that motivate him to try to atone for his family's wrongdoings. In the case of Carton, however, it becomes more interesting as in spite of having a brilliant mind and memory, he chooses not to employ these faculties for his own benefit. At the same time, he is inspired by the memory of his love for Lucie to take a rare resolve to emerge from his passivity through an act that will make *himself* a part of

the memories of Lucie and her child (more than in anyone else in that circle). In this sense, even if for him the action is soon to end, its repercussions will be felt for as long as the Darnay family continues.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Do you consider the theme of doubling central to the novel? Explain briefly.

Q 2: Do you think that Dickens's portrayal of the women characters of the novel is biased?

Q 3: How did Thomas Carlyle help Dickens write the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*?

Q 4: In what way, is the character of Carton related to the theme of resurrection?

10.5 DICKENS' ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Dickensian characters are famous for their typically whimsical names. He often drew his characters from the people he knew. The following are some of the major characters of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities.*

Doctor Manette:

Lucie's father who was unjustly imprisoned for eighteen years in Paris. He is brought back from the brink of madness by his daughter. Though he eventually comes home to England with his daughter, he still has occasional relapses of his previous condition when he is in a state of distress. He is eventually declared a hero by the revolutionaries due to his unjust imprisonment; however, the letter he wrote in his prison ironically becomes the evidence that condemns his son-in-law, Charles Darnay, to death. Consequent to this, Doctor Manette reverts back to his previous state of disjunction with the real world.

Lucie Manette:

Doctor Manette's daughter and Charles Darnay's wife. She is kind, loving and beautiful, and liked by all for her innate capacity for love and

compassion. She bears an angelic nature. She rescues the Doctor from imprisonment and gives a healing touch to instil life into a broken man; she radiates the lives of those who come near her with her unceasing care and affection. Charles Darnay (who eventually marries her), Miss Pross and Sidney Carton, besides her father, are the people who preferred her love and attention in abundant measures. It is Sydney Carton in particular who is captivated by her charm, beauty and good nature and sacrifices his own life to keep Darnay, her husband, alive. In sum, Lucie is cast in the convention of the angel of the hearth.

Charles Darnay:

Lucie's husband who was sentenced to death because of the actions of his father and uncle, the Marquis St. Evermonde. He is largely a passive character who, however, possesses a sense of justice. It is due to this that he repudiates his aristocratic title and settles in England as a person of more democratic ideals and one who will work to earn a living. However, circumstances go out of his control so that he is imprisoned twice and sentenced to death, from which he is ultimately rescued by Sydney Carton.

He is a representative of those members of the French aristocracy who were aware of the damage their families or others within their class were inflicting on the peasants but who found themselves unable to resist or stop them. Darnay also becomes a double – both literally as well as figuratively – of Carton.

Sydney Carton:

A lawyer who takes Charles Darnay's place at the Guillotine. Carton is known as the "Lion" Mr. Stryver's less successful assistant, the "Jackal". He is crude but cunning, frequently drunk, and often melancholic, and feels resigned to aimless course his once-promising life has taken. However, he is capable of feeling deep, immense, and tragic love that nonetheless remains hidden from others, particularly Lucie, with whom he is deeply in love. He redeems himself and is thus 'recalled to life' through his final act of substituting himself for Darnay in prison and at the guillotine. He thus has Charles as his double, who, with

his social status and success as well as his more conformist role and a happier fate, provides a more positive yet more simplistic aspect to the darker aspect of Carlton. In the novel, Carton, more than any other character, is strongly equated with the figure of Christ.

Ernest Defarge:

He is a former servant of Doctor Manette prior to the latter's imprisonment and cares for the doctor after his release. He is married to Madame Defarge and fears her greatly, so much so that he does not object when she demands the denunciation of Darnay. He is also an important leader of the revolution who discovers Doctor Manette's hidden letter in his old cell in the Bastille. He owns a wine shop in Paris.

Madame Defarge:

The wife of Ernest Defarge. Her family was destroyed by the Marquis St. Evremonde and his brother, the uncle and father of Darnay. She is portrayed as a cruel, vengeful agent of the revolution, who spends her days knitting the names of people she has marked as guilty into her woolwork. She is single-minded in her desire to have Charles Darnay executed, despite his proven innocence of any crimes and despite her husband's loyalty to and compassion for Dr. Manette. She is thus the novel's most powerful example of how the oppressed peasants became the oppressors during the Revolution. At the same time, she is demonised as a woman since she does not conform to current and conventional ideas of femininity.

10.6 DICKENS' NARRATIVE STYLE

A Tale of Two Cities is told from an omniscient point of view though the narrative voice frequently adopts accounts from several other characters themselves. Here it would be pertinent to look at what the narrative voice and point of view signify.

The narrative point of view refers to the perspective from which a story is told. It can therefore be a first person point of view (told in the narrator's own voice, using the personal pronoun "I" or "We"); second person point of view (rarely used and using "You" as the speaking voice);

and the third person or omniscient point of view in which the narrator is usually (but not always) uninvolved in the actions of the novel and in which the characters are referred to in the third person "He", "She" or "They". Authors frequently combine the first and third person points of view in literary works. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens mostly uses the third person point of view, but at significant points, like the shift introduced in the very first line of the novel, moves to the first person in order to heighten the symbolic significance of the respective sections. Again, even within the third person point of view, the focalisation on many occasions is not of the narrator himself but that of another character.

The narrative voice on the other hand, refers to the actual conveying of the story by a persona. That persona might be a part of the events, like the narrator in *Robinson Crusoe*, or someone who is outside the events narrated in the text, like the narrator of *A Tale of Two Cities*. At the same time, a text can carry a number of speaking voices other than the primary narrator. With reference to the present novel, the voice of the narrator subsumes within itself the accounts of other characters, like the journal of Doctor Manette and the vision of Carton prior to him being killed. The latter is one of the most important sections of the novel, in Book Three Chapter XV. Here, the third person narrative voice of the novel gives way to Carton's prophetic point of view at the end, preceded immediately by the reiteration of Christ as "the Resurrection and the Life". The narrative point of view and the narrative voice thus work in close coordination with each other in most literary works, and *A Tale of Two Cities* convincingly illustrates this interaction.

The novel proceeds largely in a linear fashion but Dickens frequently complicates this scheme through flashbacks and other devices, such as letters. The novel begins in the year 1775 then jumps to 1762 in the second book. From then on, we are constantly reminded of the passing of time. At times the narrative also unfolds itself through the human cycle of courtship, marriage, and the arrival of children (centring on the character of Lucie). Again in Book Two Chapter 21 the year is July 1789 and the event is the fall of the Bastille; however, then the events shift to August 1792. Even in Book Three, the events taking

place during the period from 1792 to 1794 are interrupted by Doctor Manette's reminiscences regarding his imprisonment which take the reader back to December 1767.

Again, with techniques, Dickens creates a compelling account– albeit fictional– of the French Revolution that has been able to leave a powerful impression on every generation of readers. Some such techniques are **foreshadowing**, that is, a literary device through which an author provides clues (for example, certain recurrent images, symbols, words, and so on) to later events that become central to the plot in a text (in this novel, for instance, the first line of the novel, the breaking of the wine casket in a street in Paris; the resemblance between Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay; and the oft-repeated phrase "recalled to life"); **hyperbole** or exaggerated description; **personification** (for instance of England and France); **leitmotifs** (the phrase "recalled to life"; the words of Christ frequently repeated in the novel); and **symbolism** (the connection made between blood and wine; knitting; the attic; shoemaking; the guillotine, and so on).



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: What is the narrative point of view in the novel?

Q 6: What are the important stylistic techniques used by Dickens in this novel?



10.7 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities* presents a powerful critique of contemporary social life in England by revisiting the collective memory of the French Revolution, particularly as it was remembered in England during his times. However, it is not merely a piece of historical fiction but it engages with larger issues of human freedom and Christian faith, revenge, forgiveness and redemption, human agency and so on. The unit has dealt with the importance of Charles Dickens as the most

outstanding novelist of the Victorian period and has highlighted the role he played as one of the strongest commentators on the social and ethical aspects of his age. The various novels he wrote substantiate this point even better. The way he fictionally revisits history through the French Revolution, along with its reverberations in England in this novel, only adds to its socio-historical significance and shows Dickens' capacity for integrating topical with larger human issues in his comprehensive vision. Other important points discussed in the unit include the themes, characterisation and the narrative technique employed by Dickens in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities.*



10.8 FURTHER READING

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Petch, Simon (2002). "The Business of the Barrister" in *A Tale of Two Cities* in *Criticism.* Volume: 44, Issue: 1.

Robson, Lisa (2008). "The 'Angels' in Dickens's House: Representation of Women in A Tale of Two Cities" (*Dalhousie Review* 72, no. 3, Fall 1992; pp. 311-333, reprinted in Bloom).

Tysdahl, Bjørn (2008). "Europe is not the Other": *A Tale of Two Cities*" (Dickens Quarterly 15, no. 2, June 1998, reprinted in Bloom).

Web Resource:

www.victorianweb.org



10.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: Yes… … The theme of doubling is initiated in the opening chapter itself through the portrayal of the latent anarchy and fear in England and those in France during 1775... …The sinister and unpredictable nature of the mob is to be found in equal measure in both London and Paris.

Ans to Q No 2: Yes… …Dickens visibly succumbs to the power relationship involved in the issue of gender exemplified by his description of the French aristocracy in terms of the Medusa… …the women of France become living embodiments of the negative aspects of revolutionary activity, even though they rely on the men to actually carry out the actions envisaged by them… …the novel denies women's moral and intellectual capacity to perform public roles.

Ans to Q No 3: Dickens drew heavily from Thomas Carlyle's book *The French Revolution: A History… …* he got overwhelmed by the amount of research Carlyle had done for his book… …but Dickens is also original while writing his own version of the Revolution.

Ans to Q No 4: Carton has lost interest in living a 'fruitful' life and seems to adopt a life-denying attitude regarding himself… …the fact that his death will mean a certain kind of 'rebirth' for Darnay and also provide newer hope primarily to Lucie and her son… …thus he becomes at one level reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice… …there are resemblances to other Biblical images too: Sydney Carton's filling his glass with brandy and pouring it on the hearth is symbolic of wine with the blood of Jesus.

Ans to Q No 5: First person point of view told in the narrator's own voice using the personal pronoun "I" or "We"… …second person point of view rarely used and using "You" and the third person or omniscient point of view in which the narrator is usually not involved in the actions of the novel and characters are referred to in the third person "He", "She" or "They"… …in this novel, Dickens mostly

uses the third person point of view but moves to the first person in order to heighten the symbolic significance of the respective sections.

Ans to Q No 6: Foreshadowing… …use of hyperbole or exaggerated description… … personification… …leitmotifs… …symbolism etc.



10.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Examine the idea of social regeneration through suffering and sacrifice as it is explored in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Q 2: Examine the novel as a piece of historical fiction, throwing light on the interrelations between history, memory, and narrative.

Q 3: Analyse the trope of doubling in Victorian fiction with special reference to the present novel.

Q 4: How do the themes in this novel interlink with each other? Can you identify other themes that follow from them?

Q 5: "The women become a medium through which the subversive forces of the revolution are sought to be contained in *A Tale of Two Cities.*" Justify the importance of this statement.

Q 6: Do you find that the theme of Resurrection important in *A Tale of Two Cities*? What are the different levels in which this theme has been treated by the author?

Q 7: Discuss Dickens' attitude toward the French Revolution. Does he sympathise with the revolutionaries? Explain with references to the text.

Q 8: In what ways does Dickens portray the villainous characters in his novel? From a character like Madame Defarge, what conclusions might the reader draw about the author's notions of human evil?

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