

6 Week Program: A Tale of Two Cities

- SAT-level vocabulary
 - Analytical discussion
 - Analytical & creative writing
 - Age-appropriate excerpts (adapted as needed)
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◆ OVERVIEW

Focus Themes:

- Duality (light/dark, London/Paris, sacrifice/self-interest)
- Justice vs. Revenge
- Transformation
- Class struggle

Skills:

- Vocabulary acquisition
- Literary analysis
- Writing (expository, persuasive, narrative)
- Text annotation & discussion

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◆ WEEK 1: *It Was the Best of Times...*

Objectives:

- Introduce Dickens's style and historical context
- Examine tone, irony, and duality
- Build vocabulary from the opening passage

Excerpt:

- Book I, Chapter 1 ("The Period")

Vocabulary:

*epoch, incredulity, tumbril, superlative, prophetic,
omniscient, paradox, abject*

Activities:

- Read and annotate opening paragraph
- Mini-lesson: Irony & juxtaposition
- Group discussion: What makes a time both best and worst?
- Creative writing: Rewrite the opening paragraph to reflect *our* era
- HW: Vocabulary sentences & paragraph explaining Dickens's tone

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◆ WEEK 2: Carton & Darnay – Mirror Images

Objectives:

- Compare characters and analyze their functions
- Understand the motif of doubles

Excerpt:

- Book II, Chapter 4 (Carton & Darnay's first interaction)

Vocabulary:

dissolute, indifferent, penitence, morose, contemptuous, melancholy, aloof, passive

Activities:

- Character chart: Carton vs. Darnay
- Class debate: Which man is more honorable?
- Writing: Analytical paragraph on duality in character
- Creative: Write a monologue from Carton's point of view
- HW: Vocabulary quiz prep & reflection on personal identity

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◆ WEEK 3: The Mob Rises

Objectives:

- Understand Dickens's depiction of mob violence and class tension
- Analyze tone and imagery

Excerpt:

- Book II, Chapter 15 (The storming of the Bastille & Defarge)

Vocabulary:

submissive, insurgent, vengeful, relentless, tumult, fervent, annihilate, wrath

Activities:

- Read & visualize the scene (create “action storyboards”)
- Discussion: What fuels a revolution? Is violence ever justified?
- Writing: Persuasive paragraph—Was Defarge a hero or villain?
- Creative: First-person account from a Paris citizen
- HW: Vocabulary practice + reading comprehension questions

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◆ WEEK 4: Madame Defarge

Objectives:

- Analyze symbolism (knitting), foreshadowing, and gender roles
- Explore the theme of revenge vs. justice

Excerpt:

- Book II, Chapters 15–16 (Madame Defarge’s knitting)

Vocabulary:

resolute, implacable, ominous, sinister, conceal, relentless, vicarious, avenger

Activities:

- Symbol decoding: What does the knitting represent?
- Group discussion: How does Dickens build dread around Madame Defarge?
- Writing: Analytical paragraph on foreshadowing
- Creative: Design a “revolutionary code” like the knitting
- HW: SAT-style vocabulary quiz + compare Defarge with a modern figure

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◆ WEEK 5: Redemption and Sacrifice

Objectives:

- Explore character transformation and self-sacrifice
- Connect themes to student experience

Excerpt:

- Book III, Chapter 13 (Carton's final acts)

Vocabulary:

redemption, serenity, sacrifice, fate, destiny, noble, selfless, absolution

Activities:

- Read and discuss Carton's transformation
- Quote analysis: "It is a far, far better thing..."
- Writing: Literary analysis—How does Carton represent redemption?
- Creative: Write a eulogy for Sydney Carton from the perspective of Lucie or Dr. Manette
- HW: Personal reflection on sacrifice (real or imagined)

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◆ WEEK 6: The Power of the People & Final Projects

Objectives:

- Reflect on major themes
- Synthesize learning into creative or analytical work

Activities:

- Vocabulary review (Jeopardy or Kahoot-style game)
- Group review: Track major characters and how they changed
- Writing project options:
 - A) **Literary essay** on theme of transformation, justice, or duality
 - B) **Creative project**: Modern retelling of a key scene, comic, diary, or podcast script
- Peer feedback workshop
- Final presentations or gallery walk