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# **BRITISH LITERATURE : 19TH CENTURY**

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though it has a dream-like quality of variety, beauty and newness, doesn't actually offer joy, love or clarity. Neither, claims the poet, can it provide certainty, peace, or relief from pain. The poet then compares their collective situation to standing on a flat and dark piece of land, which is caught up in the chaos of fighting. Here, battles between unknowing groups continue under the cover of darkness.

(e) **“For there is no friend like a sister  
In calm or stormy weather;  
To cheer one on the tedious way,  
To fetch one if one goes astray,  
To lift one if one totters down,  
To strengthen whilst one stands.”**

**Context:** These lines are taken from poem ‘*Goblin Market*’ by Christina Rossetti’.

**Explanation.** From Lizzie’s example, Laura has learned how to embody the ideal woman – simply by being a sister. Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” offers a freeing take on a stiflingly gendered Victorian society while still conforming to general social norms. Despite the limits placed on their lives by the realities of men, women have the ability to create lives full of joy and pleasure together and to save each other after traumatic events. In this manner, women do exist and act in response to men because they are required to act certain ways around them – but in response to men’s static ways, women become flexible and innovative, creating a space of their own based on the close, supportive bond of sisterhood.

(f) **Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a  
visible form,  
Yet the strong man must go :  
For the journey is done and the summit  
attained,  
And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle’s to fight ere the guerdon  
be gained,**

**The reward of it all.**

**Context:** These lines are taken from poem ‘*Prospice*’ by Robert Browning.

**Explanation.** In the same way, a man faces trials and tribulations before he meets death. The poet continues with the image of the climber toiling up a mountain, all turns dark, the storm rages fiercely as he approaches the position of the enemy. The foe he refers to is the ‘Arch Fear’ death. The poet speculates the stages that one has to pass through before one’s death. The darkness will intensify, and the storms will increase as he nears the stronghold of death, the enemy of life. There he will actually see death standing in his fearful form.

But even the strong and brave must finally succumb to him. Just as the journey ends when the climber reaches the summit after surmounting all difficulties similarly the poet will overcome all hardships and face death bravely. All must eventually die. The poet ponders over how after great struggle, life’s battles are won. One has to face and overcome many obstacles before he achieves the highest point at the end of a difficult journey. The reward can only be had after a fierce struggle.

**Q. 2. Comment on the ending of the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 31, ‘The Personal and Political Dimension of the Novel’.

**Or**

**What role does Mme. Defarge play in Dicken’s novel *A Tale of Two Cities*?**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-3, Page No. 22, ‘Dicken’s Representation of the Revolution’ and ‘The Revolutionaries in a *Tale of Two Cities*’.

**Q. 3. The relationship between Elizabeth and Henchard sees many ups and downs in the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Elaborate with examples from the text.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 67, ‘Henchard’ and Page No. 69, ‘Elizabeth-Jane’ and Chapter-6, Page No. 58, Q. No. 12, Q. No. 13 and Q. No. 14.

**Or**

**The seeds of Henchard’s downfall lie in his own character. Discuss with reference to the novel, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 67, ‘Henchard’ and Page No. 72, Q. No. 6.

**Q. 4. Critically analyze Hopkins’s poem ‘Pied Beauty’.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-16, Page No. 145, ‘Analysis’.

**Or**

**The poem ‘Ulysses’ represents the protagonists desire for gathering knowledge more than a desire for travel and adventure. Discuss.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 79, ‘Discussion’.

**Q. 5. Critically analyze Arnold’s poem ‘To Marguerite’.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-13, Page No. 116, Q. No. 1, Q. No. 2 and Q. No. 3.

**Or**

***Goblin Market* operates on two levels. Discuss both the surface meaning as well as the deeper meaning of the poem.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 137, Q. No. 2.

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# Sample Preview of The Chapter

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# BRITISH LITERATURE :

# 19TH CENTURY

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**BLOCK-I : A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

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## Introduction: *A Tale of Two Cities*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

*A Tale of Two Cities* has three books. Book I begins with the journey of Mr. Jarvis Lorry, an English banker, and young girl Lucie Manette from England to Paris. In Paris, they meet her father Dr. Edward Manette, whom she has never seen before. Dr. Edward was released after 18 years of solitary confinement. He is withdrawn and confused. Book II covers a period of approximately nine years. It begins five years after the release of Dr. Manette, and ends with the onset of the Revolution and Charles Darnay's return to France soon after. The greater part of this book is set in London and centres around the residence of Dr. Manette in the Soho district. Lucie Manette is wooed by three men and she accepts Charles Darnay. This book presents the sins of the aristocracy, especially of the attitude and actions of the *Marquis d'Evremonde* (uncle of Charles Darnay), his murder, and the consequences of the act. Book III presents the pattern of violence and counter-violence, turning them into an autonomous process as if destined by some impersonal Fate rather than by human agents. The triangular love-plot is resolved with the sacrificial death of Carton. The novel ends with an optimistic vision.

### **CHAPTER AT A GLANCE**

#### **CHARLES DICKENS: LIFE AND WORKS**

Charles Dickens, one of the greatest novelists, was born in 1812 at Portsea, England. He wrote fourteen

novels and numerous other works. He is one of the few widely read classics. His experience with poverty during his childhood and the trauma he faced made him write on various social issues afflicting the Victorian society. Dickens was just eleven and family circumstances forced him to leave school and find employment in a blacking factory. His father was sent to the debtors' prison in Marshalsea. These happenings had an impact on him. Charles could resume schooling after his father was released. He started working as clerk in a law firm. He later became a legal reporter, and subsequently, due to his skill in shorthand, a newspaper reporter of parliamentary proceedings. As a journalist, he wrote many short descriptive "sketches" of city life, which were so popular that they were collected into a book, entitled *Sketches by Boz* (1843). Boz was the pen name Dickens used.

His first novel *Pickwick Papers*, originally intended to serve merely as the text to accompany the sporting plates of the famous artist Seymour, but Dickens published it as his own book due to the former's death. Later Dickens wrote: *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Nicholas Nickleby* between 1837 and 1841. In his early novels, Dickens flayed various contemporary social evils and called for their reform. *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) is a historical novel. Another historical novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, came much later. In 1842, he visited America with his wife Catherine Hogarth and wrote *American Notes* (1848), based on the visit. *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), *Christmas Carol* (1843), *Dombey*

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and Sons (1848), and auto-biographical *David Copperfield* (1850) were written during the middle period.

His greatest novels – *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), and *Little Dorrit* (1857), *Great Expectations* (1861) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), came later. In these novels, he dealt with the issue of the “Condition of England” with a satirical representation various institutions including the court of Chancery, the “Circumlocution Office”, the factory system, the class system, the great financial schemes and money systems, and middleclass philistinism and jingoism. In 1859, he wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*. At the height of his success, in 1858, he started to give public readings from his books, which were very popular. He died after a stroke in 1870. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in the Poets’ Corner.

**A TALE OF TWO CITIES: BACKGROUND**

When Queen Victoria was ruler of England during the Victorian age, Dickens wrote his novels. The period saw great social change. The two Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867 gave franchise to working class men in response to movements like Chartism, which made demands for greater democratic participation in the government. Several other legislations in areas like factory reform, public health, wages, education, divorce and inheritance for women, trade and agriculture were passed.

The reform measures in England followed the revolutionary movements in the rest of Europe, particularly France. Dickens also campaigned for reforms like many other Victorian thinkers. The Victorian age – especially after the 1850s – saw rapid industrialization, imperial expansion and population increase. Many writers like Carlyle, Ruskin, Dickens and Morris directed their social criticism towards the materialism, the continuing economic and social disparities, the philistinism and the aggressive temper of the age, though these writers simultaneously shared the contemporary belief in progress.

Dickens both celebrated and criticized the period. For instance, for him the coming of the railways in *Dombey and Son* are both a sign of progress as well as a threat posed by change. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, he writes, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”.

**A TALE OF TWO CITIES IN RELATION TO DICKENS’ OTHER WORKS**

*A Tale of Two Cities* has some typical characteristics of Dickens’ novels.

**Dickens’ Portrayal of Women**

Chief women characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* follow the same pattern as in Dickens’ many other novels. The heroines are not among his major character creations. They are Victorian stereotype woman – the “angel in the house.” They are good homemakers, good wives, daughters and mothers. They are always patient, submissive and acceptably “feminine”. Lucie Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities* is a typical Dickens heroine. She is deprecatingly described by Sidney Carton as a “golden-haired doll”. Agnes in *David Copperfield* is also an example. Florence Dombey (*Dombey and Son*), Esther Summerson (*Bleak House*) and Amy Dorrit (*Little Dorrit*) have similar characteristics.

In contrast to the “fair” heroines, Dickens’ novels also have “dark” women who are passionate, vengeful, and troublesome. She is an outsider, a criminal, a woman with a past, or a foreigner. Mme. Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities* belongs to this category. Mme. Defarge is different from other dark women because of her commitment to the revolutionary cause. Mme. Defarge is a highly talented. Her outstanding intellectual abilities and organizational skills make her the natural leader among the masses of St. Antoine. Dickens is afraid of her commitment and her abilities.

Dickens disapproved work-oriented antidomestic women, but the school-teacher Miss Blimber (*Dombey and Son*) or the professional philanthropist Mrs. Jelleby (*Bleak House*) are the only ones clearly satirized. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Mme Defarge has to be killed because of the threat that she poses not just to domesticity but also to the larger social organizations.

**Theme of Burial and Resurrection**

Death and resurrection, with the associated concept of death-in-life, are key themes in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dr. Manette, deeply traumatized by eighteen years of imprisonment, a form of “burial” alive, is a major focus of the novel. These irders are also found in his other novels. In *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham refuses to emerge from her self-imposed burial, and becomes a warped and unhealthy. In *Our Mutual Friend*, the theme of resurrection is explored most fully. The hero, John Harmon, believed dead, is in fact rescued, and assumes another name and identity in his “resurrected” life. It allowed Dickens to explore questions of human identity through such devices and psychological case studies as the “double”, the schizophrenic, and the obsessive. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the famous “twins” Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay are anticipated and developed in other Dickens’ novels. Pip, the hero of *Great*

Expectations, and Orlick, the villain, are aspects of a single person. Similarly, Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend*, are united by their mutual, antagonism and their love for the same woman.

### Dickens and the Revolution

Dickens criticised every institution of the English state, but was apprehensive about the prospect of a revolutionary upsurge in England. During the 1830s, when Dickens started writing, the prospect of a revolution in England was very real. The country's economy was extremely unstable, and the living conditions of the working classes unbearable. Consecutive waves of working class agitations culminated in the Chartist movement. Like many of his reform-minded contemporaries, Dickens also played up that the government had failed badly in providing the working classes with even the minimum decencies of life. He believed in the deeply entrenched middle-class image of any form of plebian uprising as anarchic and mindlessly violent. In *The Chimes*, Dickens presents with great details the process by which one of the characters Will Fern is driven to total penury. Dickens highlights the anarchic, destructive dimensions of agitations when Fern speaks of participating in an uprising against an oppressive state. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens turned to the happenings in France. Dickens could project the French revolution as a mad orgy of bloodletting without any anxiety.

### *A Tale of Two Cities* and Dickens' Later Novels

*A Tale of Two Cities* differs from the other novels of Dickens' later period in one fundamental sense – his later works refuse to rest contented with “progress”, and continue to expose to radical scrutiny the vital institutions of the Age of Improvement – its laws, bureaucracy, stock market, and great metropolitan city. The period, during which Dickens wrote his later novels, is called the “Age of Improvement” or “The Age of Progress”. The period started around 1850 and saw sustained economic growth, social and political stability, and rising standards of living for the majority. *A Tale of Two Cities* is deficient in two important respects. First, the world of *A Tale of Two Cities* lacks the social density of *Dombey and Son* or *Little Dorrit* and is incapable of providing Dickens with the context where his social imagination might find full expression. *A Tale of Two Cities* has nothing that can compare with Dickens' treatment of the railway in *Dombey and Son*, or the idea of gentlemanliness in *Great Expectations*. Unlike *Dombey and Son*, *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, *Great Expectation* or *Our Mutual Friend*, which are deeply,

fundamentally critical of the society of which they are a product, *A Tale of Two Cities* is imbued with a very uncharacteristic sense of smugness. Thus, if the idea of “Englishness” is an object of contempt in *Our Mutual Friend*, in *A Tale of Two Cities* it is portrayed as an orderly and moderate mindset whose virtues are highlighted by the anarchic excesses of France.

### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q. 1. Which event in his life affected Dickens greatly?**

**Ans.** His childhood suffering after his father was sent to jail due to debt had a great impact on Dickens. At the age of eleven, family circumstances forced him to leave school and find employment in a blacking factory. He could not forget the humiliation of sinking into the working – class so suddenly, or the betrayal at being left to fend for himself. The deep sympathy of the child, and the protest against social injustices that we find in his work were because of his childhood trauma.

**Q. 2. List a few of Dickens' major novels.**

**Ans.** Charles Dickens wrote fourteen novels and numerous other works. His first novel was *Pickwick Papers*. Later *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Nicholas Nickleby* were written between 1837 and 1841. *Barnaby Rudge* was also published in 1841. Another historical novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, came much later. In 1842, after his visit to America, he wrote *American Notes* (1848). In his middle age, he wrote *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), *Christmas Carol* (1843), *Dombey and Sons* (1848), and auto-biographical *David Copperfield* (1850). His greatest novels – *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), and *Little Dorrit* (1857), *Great Expectations* (1861) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), came later. In 1859, he wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*.

**Q. 3. Identify two important aspects of the Victorian period described in the chapter.**

**Ans.** The Victorian period saw great social change. Several other legislations were passed. The two Reform Bills of 1832 and 1867 gave franchise to working class men in response to movements like Chartism, which made demands for greater democratic participation in the government. Reforms in factory, public health, wages, education, divorce and inheritance for women, trade and agriculture were introduced. The reform measures in England followed the revolutionary movements in the rest of Europe, particularly France. The Victorian period – especially after the 1850s – also saw rapid industrialization, imperial expansion and population increase.

**Q. 4. What is Dickens' relation to the period in which he wrote?**

**Ans.** As the period saw reforms in various field after the revolutionary movements in the rest of Europe, particularly France, writers like Dickens also campaigned for reforms. Dickens and many other writers directed their social criticism towards the materialism, economic and social disparities, philistinism and aggressive temper of the age. They simultaneously shared the contemporary belief in progress. Dickens also celebrated and criticized the period. For example, for him the coming of the railways in *Dombey and Son* are both a sign of progress as well as a threat posed by change.

**Q. 5. What are the two contrasted types of women characters found in Dickens' novels, and how can you relate the central female figures in *A Tale of Two Cities* to them?**

**Ans.** "Fair" heroines and "dark" women are the two different types of women characters found in Dickens' novels. Lucie Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities* is a typical Dickens fair heroine. She is deprecatingly described by Sidney Carton as a "golden-haired doll". She is a Victorian stereotype woman – the "angel in the house." She is a good homemaker, good wife, daughter and mother. She is patient, submissive and acceptably "feminine". In contrast, the "dark" women are passionate, vengeful, and troublesome. They are outsiders, criminals, women with a past, or foreigners. Mme Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities* belongs to this category.

**Q. 6. Relate the theme of burial and resurrection in *A Tale of Two Cities* to its use in some of Dickens' other novels.**

**Ans.** Death and resurrection is a major theme in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dr. Manette is a form of "burial" alive. He was deeply traumatized by eighteen years of imprisonment. He is a major focus of the novel. In *Our Mutual Friend*, the theme of resurrection is also explored. The hero, John Harmon, believed dead, is in fact rescued, and assumes another name and identity in his "resurrected" life. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the famous "twins" Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay are anticipated and developed in other Dickens' novels. Pip, the hero of *Great Expectations*, and Orlick, the villain, are aspects of a single person. Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone in *Our Mutual Friend* are united by their mutual, antagonism and their love for the same woman.

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. *A Tale of Two Cities* has:**

- (a) Two books (b) Three books  
(c) Four books (d) Five books

**Ans.** (b) Three books.

**Q. 2. Book I of *A Tale of Two Cities* begins with:**

- (a) New York (b) Du  
(a) The journey of young girl Lucie Manette from Paris to England.  
(b) The journey of Mr. Jarvis Lorry, an English banker, and young girl Lucie Manette from England to Paris.  
(c) Dr. Edward's release after eighteen years of solitary confinement.  
(d) None of these.

**Ans.** (b) The journey of Mr. Jarvis Lorry, an English banker, and young girl Lucie Manette from England to Paris.

**Q. 3. Book II of *A Tale of Two Cities*:**

- (a) Covers a period of approximately nine years  
(b) Begins five years after the release of Dr. Manette  
(c) Ends with the onset of the Revolution and Charles Darnay's return to France soon after  
(d) All of these.

**Ans.** (d) All of these.

**Q. 4. Charles Dickens was born:**

- (a) In 1812 (b) At Portsea, England.  
(c) Both (a) and (b) (d) None of these

**Ans.** (c) Both (a) and (b).

**Q. 5. Which of the following is not true about Dickens?**

- (a) He was just eleven and family circumstances forced him to leave school and find employment in a blacking factory.  
(b) His father was sent to the debtors' prison in Marshalsea.  
(c) He could resume schooling after his father was released from jail.  
(d) He started working as a teacher in a school.

**Ans.** (d) He started working as a teacher in a school.

**Q. 6. Which was Dickens's first novel?**

- (a) *Pickwick Papers* (b) *Bleak House*  
(c) *Hard Times* (d) *Little Dorrit*

**Ans.** (a) *Pickwick Papers*.

**Q. 7. Which of the following is a historical novel?**

- (a) *Barnaby Rudge* (b) *Bleak House*  
(c) *Hard Times* (d) *Little Dorrit*

**Ans.** (a) *Barnaby Rudge*.