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School: Yorba Linda High School

Grade: Senior

Book Title: A Tale of Two Cities

Book Author: Charles Dickens

Rate (1-5): 4

A Tale of Two Cities is a book by Charles Dickens that, surprise, splits its time between two cities in the late 18th century: London and Paris. It is a novel about the intense connection between two families set against the backdrop of the French Revolution and the conditions that led to it. This is a unique time period of contrasts; of hope and despair, of light and darkness. The novel centers on the plight of Charles Darnay, a man who tries to break free from his family's legacy; Lucie Manette, daughter of a Bastille prisoner; and Sydney Carton, an alcoholic lawyer who nonetheless has a sympathetic soul. Despite being a bleak novel about France's Reign of Terror, Dickens explores the themes of morality, hope, and resurrection.

I thought this novel was laudable. The novel maintains its relevance in the 21st century, with memorable characters and unforgettable quotes. Although the book's first half is a difficult read, Dickens' verbosity soon falls second to an ingenious storyline. While reading the book, it became clear to me why many regarded this book as a classic. Dickens' social criticisms are especially interesting from a historical perspective, and the character arcs are poignant. It's a book that really makes you think. There is no shortage of characters to root for, and no shortage of characters to despise. I myself was always a Carton fan. The book is rife with symbolism and figurative language that has stuck with me even after putting it down.

The novel is a difficult read, but it's a rewarding one. I might chunk it up into sections (which, incidentally, is how the book was published) to get through it better. You will come out of it with a better understanding and appreciation for the world, especially if you like historical fiction. It's a unique book, similar in story to *Les Miserables* but different in its meaning. Overall, there are many reasons for why *A Tale of Two Cities* is regarded as a classic, and each of them makes this a worthwhile read.

