
Notion of Sacrifice and Selflessness in A Tale Of Two Cities

Are sacrifices inevitable? Every day, these gestures of altruism are made all around the world. From soldiers risking their lives for the civilians of a nation, to something as simple as high school students sacrificing their sleep for their education, dedications are unavoidable during our lifetime. Whether it be a modicum to give up, like sleep, or a copious bit, such as one's life, sacrifice remains as a form of selflessness. The concept of caring more about others' wishes rather than one's own is routine in today's society. Self-sacrifice is an idea also embedded in the novel, *In A Tale of Two Cities*, by Charles Dickens. The notion of sacrifice and selflessness in *A Tale of Two Cities*, is sustained through Charles Darnay's renouncement of his title, the Revolutionaries who risked their lives, and Sydney Carton's ultimate sacrifice.

The Evremonde family had committed numerous crimes and sins in the course of Charles Darnay's life. Even after his father's death, that guilt and negativity lingered. Consequently, Darnay was driven to renounce his title as a Marquis, and give up his property and any inheritance he would have gotten. Darnay declared to his uncle, the Marquis, "It is little to relinquish. What is it but a wilderness of misery and ruin!" (Dickens 126). Darnay found this a simple sacrifice, that would finally cut all ties to his wretched family. From this moment on, he gave up all luxury to become a French tutor in England, a sacrifice many would hesitate to take, "...Princes that had been, and Kings that were to be, were not yet of the Teacher class" (Dickens 131). The power that Darnay gave up freed him from the sins of his ancestors, and allowed him to start afresh as a new person. However, as this new person, Darnay realized that he will need to work hard to maintain this modern lifestyle, "He had expected labour, and he found it, and did it and made the best of it. In this, his prosperity consisted" (Dickens 131). The previous quote reflects how Darnay's traits, such as conscientious and diligent, will benefit him throughout the story. Leaving behind his previous identity allowed him to be his own person. Darnay and his mother wished to help the peasants of France, however, never could under the name Evremonde. His role in the novel represented the nobles' inability to curve their family name, and demonstrated how with sacrifice, anyone can grasp liberty and escape their horrid destinies.

Revolutionaries, or the Third Estate, during the French Revolution, sacrificed their lives and almost everything they had to rid themselves of the tyranny of France. They hoped for a better future, a free nation of liberty for their children and significant others. Dickens' description, "Fathers and mothers who had had their full share in the worst of the day, played gently with their meagre children; and lovers, with such a world around them and before them, loved and hoped" (Dickens 228), showcased the Revolutionaries true sentiments of the tyranny of France. Though towards the end of the Revolution they transformed into bloodthirsty and rapacious murderers, they started off as petrified and intimidated peasants, who would do anything for the future of their children and loved ones. On July 14, 1789, the Storming of the Bastille took place. Approaching the end of the uprising, Madame Defarge had brutally beheaded the governor, who was at the Bastille. As the deceased governor's body slumped against the stairs of Hotel de Ville, the Revolutionaries illustrated their thirst for bloodshed and fury that they possessed, "Saint Antoine's blood was up, and the blood of tyranny and domination by the iron hand was down..." (Dickens 222). Marking the start of the revolution, the infamous revolt casted a shadow upon the tyranny of the nation. It was also at this moment where the Revolutionaries quickly

turned homicidal, thriving off the blood of their enemies; nobles, the monarchy, and anyone who stood in their way. This will remain as a prominent issue in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Though many events occur during this novel, many remember this story for its terminal cessation; the ultimate sacrifice. Sydney Carton, a man who was introduced as a diffident drunkard, became an altruistic, self-sacrificing gentleman by the end of the novel. Carton sacrificed his life for the woman he loved, Lucie Manette. The readers recalled the promise he made to her a few years before he was beheaded, "For you, and for any dear to you, I would do anything... I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you..." (Dickens 154). Indeed, he would do anything for Lucie Manette and her happiness. Another scenario, one that pertains to the previous one mentioned, was when Lucie Manette fainted when she found out Charles Darnay was sentenced to death. As Carton carried her back to the coach, he uttered, "a life you love" (Dickens 341), referencing to when he said, "there is a man who would give his life, to keep a life you love beside you!" (Dickens 155), a number of years back. This message of sacrifice came up again, due to the fact that at this moment he decided to give himself up for Lucie Manette's future and elation. With the words, "He will perish: there is no real hope" (Dickens 342), he foreshadowed his own death. Considering his passing was how the story ended, Carton's ultimate sacrifice was the last imprint the novel leaves behind on the readers. Though he did not necessarily like seeing the woman he loved with another man, he registered how blithe and radiant Lucie Manette was with him. Devoting his life was how Lucie Manette was able to reconnect with Charles Darnay and was to remain jovial, a desire Sydney Carton possessed.

Sacrifice, along with the idea of selflessness, correlates with the modern world, as well as *A Tale of Two Cities*. Darnay renouncing his title and property, the Revolutionaries risking their lives, as well as Sydney Carton sacrificing his life, all support the notion of sacrifice and selflessness in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. Reflecting this theme of sacrifice, Charles Darnay gave up his title and luxury to be free of the sins and guilt of his ancestors. In addition to Darnay, the Third Estate risked everything, even their lives, to free France from the nobles' and monarchy's tyranny. Finally, yet importantly, Sydney Carton sacrificed his life, in order to conserve the gaiety of the woman he loved, Lucie Manette. So, is sacrifice actually inevitable? Clearly, as exhibited in *A Tale of Two Cities*, sacrifices and dedications must be implemented in order to make decisions and characterize one's life. No decision in life can be executed without an act of selflessness.