

Book II: "The Golden Thread" (For Discussion)

Since there are twenty-four chapters in this section of the novel, we cannot study these in the same detail as we did the highly-significant, first six expository chapters. Please [continue](#) to read the notes in the back of the book, such as that on Temple Bar (p. 406).

In "The Golden Thread," which opens in London five years after Dr. Manette's escape from France, Dickens satirizes English justice (which Temple Bar indicates was not nearly so enlightened as Dickens's Middle Class readers liked to imagine), lawyers, and courts of law, all of which Dickens knew from his father's imprisonment for [debt](#) in 1824 at Marshalsea (notoriously depicted in *Little Dorrit*, 1855-7), from his own [employment](#) at the age of 15 as a lawyer's clerk, and from his stint as a shorthand reporter in the Courts of Doctors (of Law) Commons. The *Pickwick Papers* (1837), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Bleak House* (1852-3), and the novel following *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations* (1861), all reveal Dickens's first-hand knowledge of the British legal system (and generally reflect his contempt for it).

In the second book Dickens divides his time almost evenly between France and England, but clearly it is France's political, economic, and especially its social problems that fascinate him.

Contrast the French system of "justice," as presented in Book One, with that of England, as given in Book Two.

Book II, Chapter 1: "Five Years Later"

How does his description of Tellson's Bank suggest Dickens' characteristic over-writing?

Jerry Cruncher is the only character reminiscent of the broadly-drawn comic caricatures that figure so prominently in his early novels: how is he both comic and yet consistent with Dickens' attack on social conditions?

How do Jerry's hands and boots constitute a mystery?

How does Tellson's epitomize English complacency?

Book II, Chapter 2: "A Sight"

How is Dickens critical of both the Old Bailey and Bedlam?

Why are the Manettes in court?

What punishment is meant by "quartering"?

For what crime is the punishment reserved?

See the note on the source of this trial on p. 406 (#15). Cutting out the bombast, what precisely is the charge levelled at Darnay?

What changed impression do we get of Dr. Manette?

Book II, Chapter 3. "A Disappointment"

How does Stryver discredit the prosecution's first witness, John Barsad?

What are the incriminating circumstances under which Darnay had travelled back and forth from England to France?

What is suspicious about the Crown's evidence?

How does Roger Cly's testimony seem more conclusive?

However, what inconvenient facts discredits Cly?

Lorry's testimony merely establishes that Darnay was on the Dover-Calais packet; what damage does Lucy's do?

How does Stryver confuse the witness who testifies to Darnay's being "in that garrison-and-dockyard town" (p. 103)?

Book II, Chapter 4: "Congratulatory"

What negative impressions do we get of Carton?

We note that Dr. Manette's "face had become frozen . . . in a very curious look at Darnay: an intent look, deepening into a frown of dislike and distrust, not even unmixed with fear" (p. 112). What two devices is Dickens using here?

What suggestion does Dickens implant in the reader's mind by the closing line of this chapter?

Book II, Chapter 5: "The Jackal"

What is the relationship between the so-called Jackal and Lion?

Book II, Chapter 6: "Hundreds of People"

Why is Miss Pross jealous of Darnay and Carton?

How is the incident alluded to in question 2, Chapter 4, repeated and yet also augmented here?

What do the echoing footsteps foreshadow?

Book II, Chapter 7: "Monseigneur in Town"

Why does Dickens heap verbally ironic sarcasm (e.g., "his sanctuary of sanctuaries" on p. 134) on Monseigneur?

Why had Monseigneur taken his sister from a convent and married her off (below her social station) to a very rich Farmer-General?

What is the moral climate created by Monseigneur's guests?

How does the Marquis rationalize the accident?

In classical myth the three Fates spun, wove, and cut the thread of a person's life — how does Dickens connect Madame Defarge with these supernatural beings from the accident scene to the end of the chapter?

Book II, Chapter 8: "Monseigneur in the Country"

The setting sun's blush on the Marquis' face suggests what fate awaits him?

What accounts for the apathetic conditions of the crops, the village, and its people?

In the last chapter the Marquis thought of the peasants as rats and dogs, and here he addresses the road-mender as "pig" (p. 145) why is his rudeness ironic here?

How does this chapter confirm a connection between Charles and the Marquis?

Book II, Chapter 9: "The Gorgon's Head"

In classical myth the gorgons were creatures so repulsive that the very sight of one would turn the beholder to stone — indeed, the hero Perseus uses the head of the gorgon Medusa, whom he has slain by looking into his polished shield rather than directly at her, to turn the Titan Atlas into a mountain (Gibraltar).

How does this title seem appropriate for the chapter? Consider pages 149, 151, and 159 especially.

Though closely related, how do the Marquis and his nephew from England radically differ?

What intentions does the Marquis imply he has towards Dr. Manette and to his nephew?

How does the note around the murder weapon explain why the Marquis was killed?

Why is the Marquis, uncle to Charles Darnay, actually his enemy?

Book II, Chapter 10: "Two Promises"

What is the chronological setting relative to Chapter 9?

How does Darnay, having renounced his family inheritance, earn his living?

Why is it ironic that Dr. Manette refuses to listen when Charles tries to tell him his real name?

Why does the Doctor suffer a relapse and return to his cobbler's bench?

What is particularly noble about Charles' profession of love for Lucie, made to her father?

Book II, Chapter 11: "A Companion Picture"

Why does Stryver continually criticize and belittle Sydney Carton for his social lapses?

Why does Carton endure such abuse?

In what sense is this chapter's title ironic?

How does Dickens suggest the cause of Carton's alcoholism?

Book II, Chapter 12: "The Fellow of Delicacy"

Why does Dickens have Mr. Lorry rather than Lucie herself reject Stryver's repulsive, egotistical absurd proposal?

Why did Stryver go to Mr. Lorry before actually proposing?

Book II, Chapter 13: "The Fellow of No Delicacy"

Why does Dickens call Carton ironically "the fellow of no delicacy"?

How is Sydney Carton's love for Lucie somewhat akin to Charles Darnay's?

NOTE: The foreshadowing in "I would embrace any sacrifice for you and for those dear to you." (p. 183) is obvious. The extreme sentimentality of such writing greatly appealed to Victorian, female readers, who saw Carton as a kind of romantic Hamlet or another Heathcliff (from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*).

Book II, Chapter 14: "The Honest Tradesman"

From whose point of view is the narrative of this chapter given?

What is the technical name for a fiction which describes the coming of age of a young person, a work such as *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, or *Great Expectations*? What characteristics of this chapter have the same quality?

How is this chapter's title ironic?

Although we might momentarily feel that Jerry's boxing his son's ears for whooping at the prospect of a funeral stemmed from the father's sense of social propriety, what probably was the real reason for his hushing up his son?

Why is the crowd following the funeral procession incensed?

Although this mob is genial, its feelings against the establishment run as deep as those of the denizens of St. Antoine, how is the senseless violence of the Revolution foreshadowed here?

Why is Cly's having been "a young 'un and a straight made 'un" (p. 188) of specific significance for Jerry?

How does Jerry apparently dispose of his windfall income?

Before we actually see Jerry in his true professional capacity, what clues does Dickens provide to add suspense?

Give three examples of humorous verbal irony from the bottom of page 190.

Although we do not see the conclusion of the fishing expedition, how do we know something has gone wrong?

What purpose to the main plot of the book does this chapter serve?

Book II, Chapter 15: "Knitting"

What two mysteries are resolved for us in this chapter?

Why are the Defarges cheered by the opulence of the Versailles court?

Who are Jacques Four and Five?

How does the road-mender characterize the grandees of the court?

Book II, Chapter 16: "Still Knitting"

The success of the Revolution seems assured because there are Jacques in the strategic government offices — give an example.

Why does Defarge not answer to the name "Jacques" when greeted by the stranger in the wineshop?

What information given by Barsad strongly affects the Defarges, but differently?

Book II, Chapter 17: "One Night"

How will the new domestic arrangement for the Manettes resolve the problem of Charles' love for Lucie separating her from her father?

Book II, Chapter 18: "Nine Days"

Who is to look after Dr. Manette while the young couple are away on their honeymoon?

Why does the Doctor emerge from his conference with the bridegroom deathly pale?

How does Dickens employ Dr. Manette's relapse to generate suspense?

Book II, Chapter 19: "An Opinion"

What request of Dr. Manette, now recovered, does Mr. Lorry make and why?

Once again Dickens employs Lorry to relate a difficult truth: what was the first occasion?

How does Lorry handle it each time?

Book II, Chapter 20: "A Plea"

In spite of his own unhappy marriage, or perhaps because of it, how does Dickens characterize the Charles/Lucie relationship?

Why, surprisingly, does Sydney Carton apologize to Charles and offer his friendship?

Book II, Chapter 21: "Echoing Footsteps"

What is the date in this chapter?

What is Carton's relationship with the Darnay family?

How does Mr. Lorry's news indicate the revolution is beginning?

How do we finally get to see Dr. Manette's place of confinement in the Bastille?

How does Dickens intensify our repulsion for Madame Defarge?

Book II, Chapter 22: "The Sea Still Rises"

What is the date now?

Why does Defarge hate Foulon?

How is Foulon's punishment yet another example of poetic justice?

When Defarge says to his wife "At last it has come," why does she not totally agree?

Book II, Chapter 23: "Fire Rises"

What was the significance of the blaze the stranger made in his pipe?

Whom do the four fierce figures come to represent in this chapter?

Why can the rider solicit no aid from any quarter? Note that Gabelle ("Mr. Salt Tax") miraculously escapes.

Book II, Chapter 24: "Drawn to the Loadstone Rock"

What is the chronological setting?

Why is Lorry going to Paris?

Why does Charles offer to go in his place?

How does Dickens use the letter to the Marquis de Evremonde to generate suspense?

Why does Gabelle request Charles to return to France?

The Loadstone Rock was a mythical rock that magnetically drew ships to it so that they would crash — what for Charles is the Loadstone Rock?

Why was Tellson's Bank, London, the natural gathering place of the emigres?

Should Darnay have kept his real name and identity secret from his wife, and not told her of his trip?

Why is it ironic that Gabelle is being held in the Abbaye?

Why does Darnay unwisely feel that it is safe for him to return to assist Gabelle?

Why does he feel he must help him?