

A Tale of Two Cities: How to Annotate

An important idea to recognize as we begin this book is that *A Tale of Two Cities* is a great mystery. Part of solving any mystery is keeping track of the questions you want answered and when you are presented with a clue. Annotating your book is an excellent way to keep track of these things (and so much more!). For this involved story, I am asking you to annotate according to the following three areas: PLOT, CHARACTER, and THEME.

PLOT	CHARACTER	THEME
<i>Definition:</i> The series of event consisting of an outline of the action of a narrative or drama. <i>What to put in the margin:</i> • Questions / Mysteries • Clues / Revelations • Facts that seem important • Key moments in the story <i>Example:</i> On page 5, it is revealed that the year of the story is 1775. Since it is important to know the timeframe for both the historical and plot perspectives, this is something to box and put “1775” in the margin. <i>What will this do for us?</i> It helps us to keep track of a number of things: • The various stories that Dickens presents to us • Moments that we feel will have an important impact in the text • Changes / developments in the story	<i>Definition:</i> A person portrayed in a drama, novel, or other artistic piece; A description of a person’s attributes, traits, or abilities. <i>What to put in the margin:</i> • Names • Personality traits • Changes in how you view someone • Questions you have about a person <i>Example:</i> On page 6, we are introduced to a character known as the Woodman, or Fate. Later, it mentions that his work is unceasing and silent. This gives the impression that his progress cannot be stopped, even if no one notices. Because he is named directly, you should circle “Fate” and note these conclusions about his work. Additionally, the vagueness of his role may lead to any number of questions you could mark in the margins. One example: Why is Fate linked so closely with Death? <i>What will this do for us?</i> As with any involved story, there are a number of characters who are introduced to us. Keeping track of them is a challenge. We want to be able to: • Notice how they develop or stay the same • Keep them separate from other characters • Draw conclusions on their motives and actions.	<i>Definition:</i> An idea, point of view, or perception embodied and expanded upon in a work of art. MOTIF <i>Definition:</i> A recurrent thematic element used in an artistic or literary work. <i>What is the difference?</i> A motif is a device – often descriptive – used repeatedly. Noticing these moments may lead to conclusions regarding larger messages – themes! <i>Themes / Motifs to mark as you read:</i> • Digging • The Color RED • Going Up & Down • “Recalled to Life” • Light & Dark • The Sea • Golden • Knitting • Stone • Fountain • Footsteps • Storm, Lightning, Thunder, Tempest • Fire • Headgear • Sawing <i>What will this do for us?</i> Making a note of recurring themes and motifs allows you to establish patterns in the book. Then, you can analyze these moments to draw conclusions regarding why Dickens does this and what it teaches us.