

# STUDY PLANS

FOR NOVELS READ  
IN HIGH SCHOOLS

BY

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## PREFACE

THE plans here assembled are not for pupils but for inexperienced teachers who may welcome suggestions from one who for many years has found keen pleasure in experimenting with ways of making the study of fiction attractive and profitable. It will be observed that the plans, though possessing features in common, form a progressive course in appreciation, the study increasing in difficulty and range from year to year. The novels selected are the four I have found most satisfactory, on the whole, for a foundation course. The matter of supplementary reading, voluntary or under slight supervision, has not been considered except incidentally. There should be much of it, including not alone the works of the great masters but carefully selected novels by contemporary writers. Guides to good fiction, many of them with the book titles graded by years, are common and inexpensive.

Perhaps I should add that no attempt has been made to give the wording of the study plans a literary finish, nor to reduce everything to a justifiable system. I have not tried to expound a pedagogical theory, for I have no theory to expound. What lies between the covers of this book is little more than a collection of notes reminiscent of pleasant hours spent in getting ready for the day's task.

A. M. H.

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# STUDY PLAN

FOR

## A TALE OF TWO CITIES

FOR USE WITH NINTH OR TENTH GRADE CLASSES



## AIMS AND METHODS

What may we hope to accomplish?

1. Something worth while will be accomplished if, no matter by what method, the story is lodged in the reader's memory. It is good for young people to become acquainted with such characters as Mr. Lorry, Dr. Manette, Miss Pross, and Sidney Carton.

2. More will be gained if the novel is read with such interest that the pupils will care to read other stories by Dickens; for example, *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*.

3. *Two Cities* is sufficiently difficult to offer resistance, in some cases more than teachers are likely to realize. If the novel is read and studied in such a way as to afford simple practice in overcoming at least the minor difficulties, the pupils will be better prepared to read other standard novels. An important purpose in all literary study, even the most elementary, should be the stimulation of what may be called reader's pluck.

4. The mature, trained reader derives pleasure not alone from following the narrative but from noting the author's skill. We should not expect boys and girls to take great interest in artistry, yet they can be led to note and appreciate far more than is commonly supposed. *Two Cities* offers unusual oppor-

tunities for elementary training in literary appreciation. It may be that in the Study Plan too much attention is paid to artistry, yet nothing has been included which does not seem justifiable in the light of my own experience as a teacher.

How can the work be adapted to the immaturity of pupils many of whom may never have read anything more difficult than popular juveniles? The following expedients have been found effective.

1. The teacher may read to the class the more difficult chapters and talk about them. Many parts of *Two Cities* really need voice interpretation.

2. In assigning a lesson the teacher may indicate the difficulties that will be encountered, and suggest that especial attention be paid to them. At times it is well for him to explain in advance whatever is likely to prove confusing to an unprofitable degree.

3. Brighter pupils may be assigned, in advance, the responsibility of telling portions of the story to the class, or of reading aloud appropriate passages, or of digging the meaning from difficult sentences. The experienced teacher is quick to discover different kinds of ability in his pupils and bring these abilities into play.

4. A few of the more trying chapters may be given a second reading. Occasionally, if a chapter contains much conversation, parts may be assigned as in a play and the chapter presented in dramatic form. In general, however, a novel should be studied as a novel, not as a play.

5. Experienced teachers will not make the mistake of sending pupils to the library to read the history of the French Revolution. Even if the pupils were much older, it is doubtful if this would prove profitable. Let the teacher do the reading and supply information from time to time, yet only as it is actually needed. This applies also to the life of Dickens. The teacher should be familiar with Forster's *Life*, that he may tell the class interesting things about the author of *Two Cities*. Standard biographies are too long for children, and encyclopedia articles too uninteresting.

## BOOK THE FIRST — RECALLED TO LIFE

### I. THE PERIOD

Little harm would follow if this chapter were omitted. It forms no part of the story. Young Americans unacquainted with European history and accustomed to stories that begin briskly are bewildered by it. If the teacher has a tender conscience and shudders at the thought of omitting anything, let him read the chapter to the class and explain it, making clear that at the time of the story England and France were in a bad state, the ruling class conducting affairs recklessly, the nobility having too good a time at the expense of the lower classes, and that conditions grew worse until in a few years there was a revolution in France more frightful in some respects than our own Civil War. Dickens thinks it wonderful that England escaped a similar punishment.

The time of the opening of the story is best impressed by asking what was happening in America in 1775, a little over one hundred fifty years ago. A blackboard map showing London, Dover, and Paris is helpful. One of my associates suggests that attention be called to the title of the novel, and that the pupils be told at the outset that the scene of the story shifts from London to Paris and back again.

Young readers, she finds, are confused by such shifts. The term *Book*, as used by Dickens, is also confusing. Explain that *Book* means Part.

## II. THE MAIL

Here we have the real beginning, and how good it is! Dickens might have started his story elsewhere, at a different time of day, under commonplace circumstances. Note the combination he invents: almost midnight, raw foggy weather, a lonely stretch of muddy road; a mail coach with three passengers, drawn by four horses. Note the exciting elements and the mystery: everybody fearing an attack by highwaymen; a hoarse-voiced, mud-bespattered rider overtaking the coach as the spent horses are resting at the top of Shooter's Hill; a mystifying message given by the rider to one of the passengers; an uncanny reply which puzzles all who hear it, particularly the messenger, who does not like it at all.

What imagination Dickens must have had to picture everything distinctly as he sat at his desk writing, and to enter into the thoughts and emotions of the characters he creates. What attention to details — the steam from the horses mingling with the fog and the trembling of the coach caused by their labored breathing, Jerry's voice and hat and muffler, what the guard's box contains besides weapons, the names of the driver and the guard, the actions of the two silent passengers.

The instructor will have accomplished much if, even to a slight degree, he makes the young readers

feel that Dickens has done a difficult task well; yet his main endeavor should be to help his pupils to get the pictures and through imagination enter into the emotions. They may be asked to put themselves in the place of the characters in turn — the driver, the guard, the mutinous horse, Mr. Lorry, the two silent passengers, Jerry; to tell (make this competitive) all they can about the weather, the road, the coach; to give all the evidence the chapter furnishes that an attack by highwaymen is feared. Each pupil may be invited to imagine that he was a passenger in the coach and tell what he did and what were his emotions. Particular attention should be paid to the mysteries. Who is Mam'selle? What is the meaning of "Recalled to life"? Are the two silent passengers a third mystery?

If the edition used is not supplied with notes, the instructor may think it advisable to explain: Blackheath, Temple Bar, "the Captain," "In the king's name," "skid the wheel." If the reading is being done leisurely, and the class is unusually mature and responsive, there is the possibility of introducing Irving's *The Stage Coach* and Noyes's *The Highwayman*; yet ordinarily it is better to delay such side excursions, or shut them out altogether. Keep the narrative moving briskly.

### III. NIGHT SHADOWS

Rather than let the youngsters flounder to no purpose, it is best, when assigning the chapter, to explain that in the first two paragraphs Dickens

dwells on the thought that everybody is a mystery because nobody knows what goes on in his neighbor's mind. He then tells what goes on in Jerry's mind and in Mr. Lorry's. Because young people know little about banking, such expressions as "run on the bank" and "drafts were honored" might also be explained in advance.

This may be an opportune time to explain that Dickens lived in stagecoach days, that he took many stagecoach trips, and that when he was a shorthand reporter (see Forster's *Life*) he sometimes traveled by night. Foggy weather is more common in England than in America.

Had you ever thought, before reading this chapter, that there are as many mysteries in the world as there are people? Have you ever wished that you could know what somebody is thinking about? What are some of the things that would happen if everybody should suddenly be able to know what everybody else is thinking?

How does Jerry's ride back differ from his ride from London to Shooter's Hill? What is revealed concerning his dress and countenance which could not be seen in the night fog by the light of the coach lamps? What is he thinking about? What can be the business of this "honest tradesman" — a business that would be ruined if people could be recalled to life?

What two intermingling dreams does Mr. Lorry have while in the mail coach? What do we learn about the person he dreams he is digging from a

grave? What odd dream of your own can you recall? Are you ever able to trace the source of a dream? Are any mysteries cleared away in this chapter, or is the reader more puzzled than ever? With what kind of weather does the chapter close? Do stories usually become more cheerful when the weather brightens? Which chapter do you prefer, II or III?

#### IV. THE PREPARATION

Young readers, experience shows, are puzzled by the Dr. Manette story partly because they do not know that banking houses sometimes act as trustees, taking charge of money affairs for clients who, for one reason or another, cannot attend to business matters; partly because, living in times when nobody can be imprisoned except when convicted in a public trial, they do not understand the nature of a *lettre de cachet*, a blank form bearing the royal seal, condemning to prison the person whose name is written in at the proper place. These blanks, given by the French king to his favorites, who filled in the names, were used by the nobles in getting rid of people whom they did not like. All this calls for careful explanation. It is even well, before leaving the chapter, for the teacher to retell the story of the Manette family, so far as it is revealed in the chapter.

To enjoy a story thoroughly, one should read slowly, taking time to put himself in the place of each character. Imagine that you, a girl of seventeen, having long supposed you were an orphan and that

your father died before you were born, should suddenly be told that your father was alive, recently released after eighteen years of unjust imprisonment. What would be your emotions? Then imagine that, like Mr. Lorry, you have been commissioned to tell Lucie that her father is alive, discovered by an old servant who has secured his release. How would you go about it and what would be your emotions, particularly if you were not sure but the father was so shattered in body and mind that he could never recover? Dickens had to use imagination before he could write this difficult chapter. Has he done the task well?

How lavish Dickens is. He is not obliged to tell so much about the hotel, the town, etc. Evidently he likes to imagine and picture things. How detailed his description of Mr. Lorry. Do clothes sometimes reveal character?

Why was Dr. Manette imprisoned? How was his release brought about? Had Lucie ever seen her father? Had Mr. Lorry ever seen Lucie before? Why had she been brought up in England? Does Mr. Lorry do any "digging" while in the hotel? How does he show his nervousness? Is he strictly "a man of business"? Does Lucie act as you think a girl of her years would under the same circumstances? What are your first impressions of Lucie's servant? Has all the mystery of the earlier chapters been cleared away? How many characters have been introduced thus far? We should recognize Jerry by his voice, hair, and eyes. How should we

recognize Mr. Lorry and Lucie? What do you like best in the chapter? What have you failed to understand?

The brighter pupils may be asked to explain the following:

1. . . . nobody in the neighborhood [of Dover] could endure a lamplighter.
2. . . . although but one kind of man was seen to go into it [the room named Concord], all kinds and varieties of men came out of it.
3. . . . furnished in funereal manner with black horsehair.
4. . . . hospital procession of negro cupids.
5. . . . in the banking business we usually call our connexions our customers.
6. . . . you have been the ward of Tellson's House.
7. I pass my whole life, miss, in turning an immense pecuniary Mangle.

#### V. THE WINE-SHOP

This chapter, taking the reader for the first time to the second of the Two Cities (has he been taken to London yet?), is not only rich in dramatic interest but important because it contains the vague beginning of the story of the French Revolution which serves as background for the story in which Lucie is a principal character. It is a difficult chapter for young readers. They are confused by figurative language and mystified by veiled references to the Revolution.

Even though it is not brought to the attention of the class, the teacher should bear in mind the natural sequence plan of the chapter. First is depicted a street incident, at first sight merry yet growing sad as the chance spectator — Mr. Lorry, for instance — views it more thoughtfully. Then comes a general survey, such as the spectator might make, of the street where the incident occurs, an inventory of signs pointing to poverty and discontent. The survey brings the observer finally to the wine-shop and its proprietor, whose personal appearance, speech, and actions single him out as a man of importance in St. Antoine. Next we enter the wine-shop, meet the wife of the proprietor, and witness a little scene in which four men, all bearing the name Jacques, figure. Then the story which took definite shape in IV is resumed.

One purpose of literary study with young readers is to give practice in visualizing. The chapter affords excellent opportunity for such practice, for it is crowded with picture-bringing details. The importance of the details in the street scene should be noted, each pointing to desperate poverty. How effective the pictures are! Simply to have said that the people in St. Antoine were poor and growing desperate would have made little impression. "Look for yourself," the novelist says, pointing to this and that.

Often little things are significant. Here are significant trifles: stores selling tools and weapons, the word the jester writes on a wall, Defarge wip-