Applied Practice in

A Tale of Two Cities

PRE-AP*/AP*

By Charles Dickens

RESOURCE GUIDE

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GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

**absolute**—a word free from limitations or qualifications (“best,” “all,” “unique,” “perfect”)

**adage**—a familiar proverb or wise saying

**ad hominem argument**—an argument attacking an individual’s character rather than his or her position on an issue

**allegory**—a literary work in which characters, objects, or actions represent abstractions

**alliteration**—the repetition of initial sounds in successive or neighboring words

**allusion**—a reference to something literary, mythological, or historical that the author assumes the reader will recognize

**analogy**—a comparison of two different things that are similar in some way

**anaphora**—the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning of consecutive lines or sentences

**anecdote**—a brief narrative that focuses on a particular incident or event

**antecedent**—the word, phrase, or clause to which a pronoun refers

**antithesis**—a statement in which two opposing ideas are balanced

**aphorism**—a concise statement that expresses succinctly a general truth or idea, often using rhyme or balance

**apostrophe**—a figure of speech in which one directly addresses an absent or imaginary person, or some abstraction

**archetype**—a detail, image, or character type that occurs frequently in literature and myth and is thought to appeal in a universal way to the unconscious and to evoke a response

**argument**—a statement of the meaning or main point of a literary work

**asynedeton**—a construction in which elements are presented in a series without conjunctions
**VOCABULARY LIST FOR A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

Note: Vocabulary from the literary passage is listed first, followed by vocabulary from the questions and answers.

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Directions: This part consists of selections from *A Tale of Two Cities* and questions on their content, form, and style. After reading each passage, choose the best answer to each question.

Note: Pay particular attention to the requirement of questions that contain the words NOT, LEAST, and EXCEPT.

**Passage 1, Questions 1-9.** Read the following passage from Book I, Chapter 1 of *A Tale of Two Cities*, “The Period,” carefully before you choose your answers.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever. It was the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. Spiritual revelations were conceded to England at that favoured period, as at this. Mrs. Southcott had recently attained her five-and-twentieth blessed birthday, of whom a prophetic private in the Life Guards had heralded the sublime appearance by announcing that arrangements were made for the swallowing up of London and Westminster.

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Even the Cock-lane ghost had been laid only a round dozen of years, after rapping out its messages, as the spirits of this very year last past (supernaturally deficient in originality) rapped out theirs. Mere messages in the earthly order of events had lately come to the English Crown and People, from a congress of British subjects in America: which, strange to relate, have proved more important to the human race than any communications yet received through any of the chickens of the Cock-lane brood.

France, less favoured on the whole as to matters spiritual than her sister of the shield and trident, rolled with exceeding smoothness down hill, making paper money and spending it. Under the guidance of her Christian pastors, she entertained herself, besides, with such humane achievements as sentencing a youth to have his hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers, and his body burned alive, because he had not knelt down in the rain to do honour to a dirty procession of monks which passed within his view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards. It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of France and Norway, there were growing trees, when that sufferer was put to death, already marked by the woodman, Fate, to come down and be sawn into boards, to make a certain movable framework with a sack and a knife in it, terrible in history. It is likely enough that in the rough outhouses of some tillers of the heavy lands adjacent to Paris, there were sheltered from the weather that very day, rude carts, bespattered with rustic mire, snuffed about by pigs, and roosted in by poultry, which the Farmer, Death, had already set apart to be his tumbrils of the Revolution. But that Woodman and that Farmer, though they work unceasingly, work silently, and no one heard them as they went about with muffled tread: the rather, forasmuch as to entertain any suspicion that they were awake, was to be atheistical and traitorous.

In England, there was scarcely an amount of order and protection to justify much national boasting. Daring burglaries by armed men, and highway robberies, took place in the capital itself every night; families were publicly cautioned not to go out of town without removing their furniture to upholsterers’ warehouses for security; the highwayman in the dark was a City tradesman in the light, and, being recognised and challenged by his fellow-tradesman whom he stopped in his character of “the Captain,” gallantly shot him through the head and rode away; the mail was waylaid by seven robbers, and the guard shot three dead, and then got shot dead himself by the other four, “in consequence of the failure of his ammunition:” after which the mail was robbed in peace; that magnificent
potentate, the Lord Mayor of London, was made to stand and deliver on Turnham Green, by one highwayman, who despoiled the illustrious creature in sight of all his retinue; prisoners in London gaols fought battles with their turnkeys, and the majesty of the law fired blunderbusses in among them, loaded with rounds of shot and ball; thieves snipped off diamond crosses from the necks of noble lords at Court drawing-rooms; musketeers went into St. Giles’s, to search for contraband goods, and the mob fired on the musketeers, and the musketeers fired on the mob; and nobody thought any of these occurrences much out of the common way. In the midst of them, the hangman, ever busy and ever worse than useless, was in constant requisition; now, stringing up long rows of miscellaneous criminals; now, hanging a housebreaker on Saturday who had been taken on Tuesday; now, burning people in the hand at Newgate by the dozen, and now burning pamphlets at the door of Westminster Hall; to-day, taking the life of an atrocious murderer, and to-morrow of a wretched pilferer who had robbed a farmer’s boy of sixpence.

All these things, and a thousand like them, came to pass in and close upon the dear old year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. Environed by them, while the Woodman and the Farmer worked unheeded, those two of the large jaws, and those other two of the plain and the fair faces, trod with stir enough, and carried their divine rights with a high hand. Thus did the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five conduct their Greatnesses, and myriads of small creatures--the creatures of this chronicle among the rest--along the roads that lay before them.

1. The first paragraph contains examples of all of the following EXCEPT
   (A) paradox
   (B) euphemism
   (C) anaphora
   (D) antithesis
   (E) personification

2. In the second paragraph, the narrator points out the complacency of
   (A) English royalty
   (B) French royalty
   (C) the common people
   (D) those with economic power
   (E) merchants and fishermen

3. The narrator’s attitude toward the religious establishment could best be described as
   (A) respectful
   (B) derisive
   (C) resigned
   (D) compassionate
   (E) ambivalent

4. The personification of Fate and Death serves to
   I. show the inevitability of a revolution
   II. remove all responsibility from the common people
   III. highlight the magnitude of coming events
   (A) I only
   (B) II only
   (C) I and II only
   (D) I and III only
   (E) I, II, and III

5. Lines 69-71 are best interpreted to mean that
   (A) a belief in Fate or Death was dangerous
   (B) the clergy made sure that the people remained ignorant
   (C) the people dared not acknowledge the signs of coming unrest
   (D) the people feared that Death and Fate would harm them
   (E) those who spoke up were assumed to be allied with England
6. The sentence which begins in line 72 contains an example of the rhetorical device of

(A) litotes
(B) chiasmus
(C) hyperbole
(D) metaphor
(E) antithesis

7. The structure of the paragraph which begins in line 72 is that of

(A) a hypothesis followed by commentary
(B) a proposal followed by discussion
(C) an assertion followed by evidence
(D) anecdotes followed by explanations
(E) a boast followed by justification

8. From lines 102-112, it is apparent that the legal establishment in England

(A) routinely executed innocent people
(B) showed a marked lack of discrimination
(C) was the sole voice of reason in the country
(D) provided due process for the accused
(E) considered murder to be the most serious offense

9. In the last paragraph, the events which “came to pass in and close upon the dear old year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five” are NOT attributed to

(A) the year itself
(B) Fate
(C) Death
(D) royalty
(E) the common people
Question 4

(Suggested time--40 minutes)

Read the following passage from Book II, Chapter 16 of *A Tale of Two Cities*, “Still Knitting.” Then, in a well-organized essay, discuss how the author uses the resources of language to convey his attitude toward, and heighten the suspense regarding, the coming revolution. Include in your discussion how the portrayal of Madame Defarge and the other women functions in the passage.

In the evening, at which season of all others Saint Antoine turned himself inside out, and sat on door-steps and window-ledges, and came to the corners of vile streets and courts, for a breath of air, Madame Defarge with her work in her hand was accustomed to pass from place to place and from group to group: a Missionary---there were many like her---such as the world will do well never to breed again. All the women knitted. They knitted worthless things; but, the mechanical work was a mechanical substitute for eating and drinking; the hands moved for the jaws and the digestive apparatus: if the bony fingers had been still, the stomachs would have been more famine-pinched.

But, as the fingers went, the eyes went, and the thoughts. And as Madame Defarge moved on from group to group, all three went quicker and fiercer among every little knot of women that she had spoken with, and left behind.

Her husband smoked at his door, looking after her with admiration. “A great woman,” said he, “a strong woman, a grand woman, a frighteningly grand woman!”

Darkness closed around, and then came the ringing of church bells and the distant beating of the military drums of the Royal Guard, as the women sat knitting, knitting. Darkness encompassed them. Another darkness was closing in as surely, when the church bells, then ringing pleasantly in many an airy steeple over France, should be melted into thundering cannon; when the military drums should be beating to drown a wretched voice, that night all potent as the voice of Power and Plenty, Freedom and Life. So much was closing in about the women who sat knitting, knitting, that they their very selves were closing in around a structure yet unbuilt, where they were to sit knitting, knitting, counting dropping heads.