

A Dramatisation of *A Tale of Two Cities* for English Learners

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Abstract

Drama offers many possibilities for teaching English as a second language; however, a lack of drama-based teaching materials suggests it is not widely used in the classroom. To investigate the practical difficulties of using drama in the classroom, I wrote a script for Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. The objectives and process of writing the script and the script itself are presented in this paper.

Key words: English as a second language, drama,

Introduction

In a previous paper, I reported on using drama as an extra-curricular English activity.¹⁾ The merits of using drama to teach English as a second language have been discussed by several authors, and their work has been reviewed by Belliveau and Kim.²⁾ Drama offers many possibilities for teaching English as a second language and as a second subject in mixed ability classes in tertiary education, to Japanese students who have received at least 6 years of English instruction. However, a major obstacle to the wider use of drama in the classroom, is quite simply a dearth of structured teaching materials. To investigate the difficulties behind using drama in the classroom, I have scripted a dramatisation of Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. In Outline, I write about the context for which the drama was conceived and the necessary limitations this entails, and in Discussion, the structure of the dramatisation is discussed in more detail. The full script is presented as an Appendix.

Outline

A Tale of Two Cities was written and published in weekly installments by Charles Dickens in 1859. According to some accounts it is one of the world's

best-selling novels. The story contains many themes and plots, but the one best remembered and easiest to relate is the triangular relationship of Sydney Carton, Charles Darnay, and Lucie Manette. The two men, Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay look remarkably alike. This physical likeness leads to the Frenchman Charles Darnay being rescued twice from execution, once in London and once in Paris, by Sydney Carton. The dramatisation presented here was developed as an accompaniment for the Macmillan Graded Reader of *A Tale of Two Cities*,³⁾ although it could also be used as a template for the Oxford or Penguin adaptations of the same novel.^{4,5)} The drama was developed for use with university students, but it could also be used in high school English education, as the grammar (but not the vocabulary) is restricted to the tenses taught in junior high school. There is no need for elaborate stage furniture or props. Most of what is required can be improvised from classroom furniture: the titles of the scenes can be written on a blackboard. I suggest that the same person play the roles of Sydney Carton and Charles Darnay, wearing a battered hat and shabby jacket for Sydney's role, and a smart jacket for Charles, to differentiate the roles. For ease of comprehension, the dialogues are written in modern

English, and idiomatic usage has been avoided. The use of pronouns has also been restricted, to make understanding easier. In the following section I give an overview of the drama, some comments on stage direction, and the educational objectives.

Discussion

The Old Bailey - London: The drama begins with the trial of Charles Darnay at the Old Bailey in London. How Dr Manette arrived in London is revealed through the court procedure of asking witnesses questions and listening to their answers. Questions, questions, questions: Practice in articulating questions is the underlying objective of this part of the drama. Stage directions have not been given. This should be left to the students to decide, and should form a basis for discussion. Audience participation is also required in this scene. This is one of two scenes in which Charles Darnay and his look-alike, Sidney Carton appear together. Point out this problem, but let the students decide how to overcome it.

Defarge's Wine Shop - Paris (1): The story moves to Paris. The story of Gaspard and the Marquis St Evrémont is told, and we learn more about Dr Manette through the dialogue.

Mr Stryver's House - London: This part of the play is an invention and is not present in Dickens' novel. It is used as a bridge in the narrative to get Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton from London to Paris, the former as a prisoner, the latter as an aide to Mr Lorry.

The Tribunal - Paris: Once again Charles Darnay is being tried, this time by a revolutionary tribunal. The two trials of the novel are condensed into one for convenience.

Defarge's Wine Shop - Paris (2): Now we learn of the growing danger to Lucie, and Sydney Carton blackmails the spy, John Barsad, to gain access to the prisoner, Charles Darnay.

The Escape - La Force: Sydney Carton drugs Charles Darnay and changes places with him. Barsad helps to carry Charles to Mr Lorry's coach.

The Escape - A Coach at the Gates of Paris: The coach carrying Lucie, Dr Manette, Mr Lorry and Charles Darnay safely leaves Paris.

A limitation of the present script is that it concentrates on the narrative rather than the characters, and in the process Charles Darnay becomes a rather ephemeral figure. The triangular love story of Lucy, Charles and Sydney, also becomes a victim of this process. For convenience, Miss Pross, Jerry Cruncher, and Little Lucie all disappear from the narrative.

Ideally, each chapter of the novel should be dramatised, as a comprehension aid for the text. However, the drama as presented could also be performed *in toto* in English, since most of the parts are short enough for memorisation. As with any drama work, it is the interpretation of the actors and the decisions of the director, that are important.

One conclusion to be drawn from this exercise is that scripting drama is time-consuming, and presents its own difficulties with creating an easily understood narrative.

References

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Appendix - *A Tale of Two Cities* Dramatisation

A Tale of Two Cities			Mr Lorry, who do you work for?
	The Old Bailey - London (1780)	Lorry:	Tellson's Bank of London and Paris, sir.
Judge:	Silence in court!	Wig:	Why were you travelling with Dr and Lucie Manette?
	Mr Wig who is the accused?	Lorry:	Dr and Miss Manette are clients of Tellson's Bank. I was helping Miss Manette bring her father to London.
Wig:	A Frenchman, Charles Darnay.	Wig:	Did you see Darnay on the ship?
Judge:	What is M Darnay accused of Mr Wig?	Lorry:	Yes, sir. He helped Miss Manette take care of her father.
Wig:	Darnay is a French spy.	Wig:	Did Darnay talk to you about the American Colonies.
Judge:	What are the accusations?	Lorry:	No sir, he did not.
Wig:	Darnay travelled many times between England and France. There are witnesses. One witness saw Darnay give papers to a Frenchman.	Wig:	Mr John Barsad. (<i>calling the witness</i>)
Judge:	Who are your witnesses?		How often do you travel to France Mr Barsad?
Wig:	Lucie Manette. (<i>calling the witness</i>)	Barsad:	Very often, sir. I have business in France.
	Miss Manette, where did you see Charles Darnay?	Wig:	Are you an Englishman Mr Barsad?
Lucie:	We were on a ship travelling from Calais to Dover?	Barsad:	Yes, sir, and I'm very proud to be an Englishman.
Wig:	When did you travel from Calais to Dover?	Wig:	Where did you see Darnay?
Lucie:	Last year.	Barsad:	I saw him in Calais, sir. He was giving papers to a Frenchman. A French spy!
Wig:	Why were you travelling from France?	Stryver:	My Lord (<i>to the Judge</i>)
Lucie:	I was bringing my father to England. He was very ill at the time.		May I ask the witness questions?
Wig:	Did Darnay speak to you about the American Colonies?	Judge:	Yes, Mr Stryver.
Lucie:	No sir, but he was very kind to us. He helped me take care of my father.	Stryver:	Are you an honest man, Mr Barsad.
Wig:	Thank you Miss Manette. Dr Mannette. (<i>calling the witness</i>)	Barsad:	An honest man? Why, of course, sir.
	Dr Manette did you speak to Darnay on the ship?	Stryver:	What is your business in France?
Dr Manette:	I don't remember.	Barsad:	Ahem (<i>nervously</i>), it's private business, sir.
Wig:	You don't remember?	Stryver:	Do you give papers to Frenchmen?
Dr Manette:	No, sir. I was very ill at the time, and I have no memory of the journey.	Barsad:	Sometimes, sir, yes.
Wig:	Mr Jarvis Lorry. (<i>calling the witness</i>)	Stryver:	M Darnay also has private business in France. Why are his papers different from your papers?
		Barsad:	(<i>angrily</i>) Darnay gave his papers to a French spy! I saw them meet at

	night. I heard them talk about George Washington and the American Colonies.	Jacques 3:	Evrémonde. The Marquis deserved to die. He killed Gaspard's child.
Stryver:	Are you a spy, Mr Barsad.	Mme Defarge:	Many have suffered at the hands of Evrémonde.
Barsad:	A spy! Me, sir? No, sir!		
Stryver:	You say you saw Darnay and the French spy at night. Were you paid to say you saw Charles Darnay?	Jacques 1:	The people have suffered at the hands of the aristocrats for too long.
Barsad:	(<i>weakly</i>) No, sir.	Jacques 2:	Soon we will kill all the aristocrats and make new laws.
Stryver:	Are you sure Mr Darnay is the man you saw?	M Defarge:	Be careful what you say. There is a new man in St Antoine. A spy.
Barsad:	Quite sure! I never forget a face?	Jacques 3:	I have seen him. He is English, but he speaks French well.
Stryver:	(<i>pointing at Sydney Carton</i>) Have you ever seen this man before?	Barsad:	(<i>entering, Mme Defarge gets up and puts a rose in her hair</i>) Good afternoon. A glass of wine, please.
Audience:	<i>Amazing! Like two peas in a pod! Just like twins! I've never seen two people look so alike. I don't believe it!</i>	Mme Defarge:	Good afternoon.
Stryver:	This is my clerk, Mr Sydney Carton. Does he look like Charles Darnay?	Barsad:	It is bad news about Gaspard.
Barsad:	(<i>uncomfortably</i>) Why, yes sir, but....	Jacques 1:	He killed the Marquis St Evrémonde.
Stryver:	Did Mr Carton give papers to a French spy in Calais?	M Defarge:	And now, he too, is dead.
Barsad:	(<i>confused</i>) Yes, er, I mean no, sir!	Barsad:	Why did Gaspard kill the Marquis?
Stryver:	It was night. You saw a man in the dark, but the man was not Mr Carton. Mr Carton and Mr Darnay look very alike, so it was not M Darnay either.	Jacques 2:	Gaspard was a bad man. He was executed.
Judge:	Members of the jury, what is your verdict.	Barsad:	Was the Marquis a bad man?
Audience:	Not guilty!	Barsad:	Was the Marquis executed, too?
		Jacques 3:	We know nothing about that.
		Barsad:	There is, however, a new Marquis.
		Mme Defarge:	Yes, the nephew of the old Marquis.
		Barsad:	The nephew lives in England.
		Jacques 1:	Really?
		Barsad:	(<i>to M and Mme Defarge</i>) I know about you. You took care of Dr Manette when he came out of the Bastille prison.

Defarge's Wine Shop (1) - Paris (1787)

M Dafarge:	No names! This is Jacques 1. You are Jacques 2, and you are Jacques 3. Jacques brings news of Gaspard.	M Defarge:	Everyone knows that. I was his servant before he went to prison.
Jacques 1:	Gaspard is dead. They left his body hanging in the village for everyone to see.	Barsad:	Why did Dr Manette go to prison?
		Mme Defarge:	We do not know the reason why.
		Barsad:	Did the Marquis St Evrémonde send Dr Manette to prison.
Jacques 2:	Gaspard killed the Marquis St	M Defarge:	We know nothing about this,

Barsad: monsieur.
Very well. But I have news for you.
Dr Manette's daughter, Lucie, has married. Her husband is known as Charles Darnay in England, but in France he has another name, Monsieur the Marquis St Evrémonde.

Mr Stryver's House - London (1790)

Stryver: What is the latest news from France?
Tranby: You mean the Revolution.
Stryver: Yes. I hear there is much trouble in France.
Richer: There are executions every day.
Carton: Many good people are losing their lives at the guillotine.
Harnet: And many try to escape to England!
Tranby: I'm glad I don't live in France.
Harnet: I'm glad I'm not a French aristocrat. They are accused of being enemies of the Republic, and then executed!
Richer: M Darnay often travels to France. What does he say about the revolution?
Stryver: I don't know. I haven't seen him since his wedding to Dr Manette's daughter. How about you Carton? You often visit their house.
Carton: I haven't seen him since his wedding either. How about you Mr Tranby?
Tranby: I met Dr Manette, yesterday. He said, M Darnay had gone to York on business.
Harnet: That's odd. I know M Darnay often travels to France on business. But York? I didn't know he had any business there.
Carton: Mr Lorry of Tellson's Bank gets news from Paris, regularly. We will have to wait for him to arrive, for news from France.

Stryver: I think we will not have to wait long. I can see Mr Lorry outside, now.
Enter Mr Lorry
Stryver: Why Mr Lorry, you look so upset.
Lorry: Indeed I am. I have terrible news from Paris. Where are Dr Manette and Lucie.
Stryver: What do you mean?
Lorry: We don't have any time to waste. I must find Dr Manette and Lucie immediately.
Richer: What is the news Mr Lorry? And what is the hurry?
Lorry: I have news from Paris. M Charles Darnay is a prisoner of the Republic.
Tranby: How can that be? He's in York, is he not.
Lorry: No, no, no. Because of the revolution, he didn't want Dr Manette or Lucie to know he was going to France.
Carton: A prisoner of the Republic? He is in great danger.
Lorry: Yes, yes. But Dr Manette was a prisoner in the Bastille. Maybe he can help Charles. Maybe the tribunal will listen to him. We must hurry to Paris as fast as we can.
Stryver: Yes, and Mr Carton must travel with you, too. He studied in Paris and knows the city well.

The Tribunal - Paris (1794)

Tribune 1: Charles St Evrémonde, also known as Charles Darnay
Tribune 2: You are an aristocrat and an enemy of the French Republic.
Death to the aristocrat!
Audience: I do not want to be the Marquis St Evrémonde, and I am not an enemy of France.

Tribune 3:	Aristocrats steal from the people of the Republic.	Audience:	1789, I was at the Bastille. <i>Long live the Republic!</i>
Audience:	<i>Death to the thief!</i>	M Defarge:	When the gates opened, I went to the cell where Dr Manette had been prisoner for 18 years, and I found this letter.
Darnay:	I have taken nothing from the people of France.		
Tribune 1:	Who will speak for you, St Evrémonde?	Tribune 3:	M Defarge, please read the letter.
Darnay:	Citizen Gabelle and Citizen Manette will speak for me.	M Defarge:	I, Alexander Manette, am a doctor in Paris. In December 1757 the Marquis St Evrémonde called me to his château. At the château, there was a young woman. She was very ill. She was dying. She kept repeating: "My father, my husband, my brother."
Tribune 2:	Citizen Gabelle. (<i>calling for Gabelle</i>) Who are you?		Her brother was in another room. He had been injured in a sword fight. He was dying too. He said: "St Evrémonde did this. He killed my father. He brought my sister to the château and killed her husband. Only my youngest sister, Thérèse, escaped."
Gabelle:	I was the servant of the Marquis St Evrémonde. When the Marquis died, Charles Darnay did not want to be an aristocrat. He lived in England, and he told me to do my best for the poor people of France. He is a good man.		After the young man and woman died. I returned to Paris. I wrote to the King about this terrible event. The next day I was brought to the Bastille. There was no trial. I have been 10 years in the Bastille with no news of my wife or child. The house of Evrémonde has no pity. I, Alexander Manette, condemn the evil family of St Evrémonde.
Tribune3:	Doctor Manette. (<i>calling for Dr Manette</i>) Doctor, what do you have to say?		
Dr Manette:	I was a prisoner in the Bastille for 18 years.	Audience:	<i>Death to the aristocrat! Death to St Evrémonde</i>
Audience:	<i>Long live Dr Manette!</i>		
Dr Manette:	Charles Darnay helped me to escape to England. I was very ill, and he took care of me. The English said, "Darnay is a French spy, and a friend of the American revolutionaries." Now you say, "He is an enemy of France." You are wrong. He is a good man.	Tribune 2:	Charles St Evrémonde, your uncle was an enemy of the people. You are an Evrémonde, an enemy of the people. Tomorrow you will go to the guillotine.
Audience:	<i>Long live the people of France!</i> <i>Let him go! He is a friend of the Revolution!</i>		
Tribune 1:	Charles Darnay, you are not guilty. You are free to go.		
M Defarge:	Wait! <i>J'accuse!</i>		
Tribune 2:	Who are you?		
M Defarge:	I am Ernest Defarge. I was the servant of Dr Manette before he was sent to the Bastille. On the 14th July		

Defarge's Wine Shop (2) - Paris (1794)

Carton: (*enters*) A glass of wine, please.

Mme Defarge: (to M Defarge) He looks like Evrémonde.

M Defarge: (looking at Carton) Hmm, yes, a little.

Jacques 1: Yes, a little, but it cannot be Evrémonde, because he is in prison. He will die at the guillotine tomorrow.

Mme Defarge: Evrémonde! The guillotine! I have waited a long time for this. And he has a wife in Paris. She should go to the guillotine too.

M Defarge: Yes, Thérèse. But Lucie is Dr Manette's daughter. He has suffered much because of St Evrémonde. And you would kill his daughter, too?

Mme Defarge: Listen. It was my family, my father, my brother, my sister and her husband who were killed by St Evrémonde. I will not be satisfied until all the Evrémonde's are dead.

Jacques 2: Many people died because of Evrémonde.

Jacques 3: There was Gaspard, too.

M Defarge: Enough! I must prepare for tomorrow. Good night!

All except Carton leave - enter Barsad

Barsad: (*frightened and surprised*) Evrémonde! What are you doing here? How did you escape from prison?

Carton: I am not Evrémonde, but I do know you, John Barsad.

Barsad: (*angrily*) Who are you? Tell me quickly, before I call the Revolutionary Police.

Carton: And let me tell them about the English spy, John Barsad?

Barsad: (*scared*) Who are you, and what do you want?

Carton: Barsad, you work at the La Force prison.

Barsad: Yes.

Carton: I wish to see the prisoner, Charles Darnay, tomorrow morning.

Barsad: It is too difficult. I won't help you.

Carton: If you help me, I will keep your secrets. If you don't, you too will go to the guillotine!

Barsad: Very well then, 11 o'clock, and keep your promise.

Enter Lorry

Barsad: Good night.

Lorry: Who was that man? Haven't I've seen him before?

Carton: He will help me to see Charles Darnay tomorrow morning.

Lorry: That will be very dangerous!

Carton: Mr Lorry, if we stay in Paris, we are all in danger, especially Lucie. Have a coach ready to leave at noon tomorrow. Make sure that Lucy is on it. Here, take my papers. Keep them safe for me. I will join you at the coach. Be ready to depart when I arrive. Don't leave without me. I have no time to explain. Do it! Many lives depend on it!

The Escape - La Force Prison

Barsad: A visitor for you Evrémonde. (*leaves*)

Darnay: Carton! What are you doing here?

Carton: I came to say goodbye.

Darnay: I thank you for your visit. But, it is dangerous for you here.

Carton: What are you doing?

Darnay: I am writing a letter to my wife, Lucie.

Carton: Then, finish your letter quickly, and I

will take it to Lucie. Guard: Bon voyage, citizens.

Darnay: That is very kind of you. Lucie: How did Charles escape from prison.

Darnay writes. Carton drugs Darnay and changes clothes with him. Lorry: A good man helped us. We will never be able to thank him.

Carton: Barsad! (*enters*) *****

Hurry Barsad, and take care. Take him to Mr Lorry.

Barsad: And you will keep your promise? Fifty-two must die at the guillotine today. You are No. 23.

Carton: Yes, man. Hurry, and keep your promise too, or we will all die.

Barsad: Jacques! Come, help me with the Englishman. He has fainted. These English are so weak! Ha, ha, ha!

The Escape - A Coach at the Gates of Paris

Guard: Halt! Who goes there? Citizens, your papers please.

Mr Lorry, Englishman.

Lorry: That is me.

Guard: You are leaving early. You will miss the executions. Fifty-two enemies of the Republic will die today.

Lucie Darnay? (*Lucie leans forward and nods*)

There will be a big crowd. Many will want to see the death of Evrémonte.

Citizen Manette?

Lorry: He is the poor old man.

Dr Manette: Room 105, North Tower. Room 105, North Tower.....

Guard: Sydney Carton?

Lorry: He is the sick man next to me.

Guard: Ha! What is wrong with him? Another Englishman who does not like a revolution?

Where are you going?

Lorry: To Calais, and then to England by ship.