



A Tale of Two Cities

Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870)

Read by:	Paul Adams	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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Charles Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859. The novel had been serialized to great acclaim that year in Dickens's new literary periodical, *All Year Round*. It's a complex story, though with fewer sub-plots than the average Dickens novel, concerning characters caught up in the heady times before and during the French Revolution. It's a story complete with the storm front of overheated passions and the fluid unpredictability of the masses when their ostensibly reasonable group-think devolves into mob mentality. It calls to mind a recent song lyric: "Meet the new boss; same as the old boss," and those words are most appropriate for what happened in France in the late 18th Century when the people stumbled their way to a kind of sovereignty that deposed and executed a King and his wife. Dickens identifies with the oppressed in the characters of Dr. Manette and Gaspard, and he paints the

villain of all villainy in the despised Marquis St. Evremonde. But the mob, grown bestial with bloodlust, ultimately violates Dickens unerring sense of balance and fairness. The reign of terror executes those who'd started the Revolution, and it is against this backdrop that Dickens raises his eyes to a better place that will come about with the kind of loving self-sacrifice embodied in the selfless act of Sydney Carton. (Summary by Michael Hogan)

Charles John Huffam Dickens (February 7, 1812 – June 9, 1870) was an English novelist in the mid-19th Century who was one of the most prolific, popular and politically radical in the English language. He worked as a journalist as a young man before turning to fiction. His first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, was a great success and was followed by one blockbuster after another. He wrote at a torrid pace; most of his books first appeared as serialized chapters in weekly and monthly periodicals before being published as novels. He had a genius for uncanny caricatures of "personality types", which he tagged with catchy names and mannerisms that are still part of the cultural lexicon to this day.

He was born into a family of moderate means that went bankrupt during his early childhood, forcing Dickens to go to work at age twelve pasting labels on jars of bootblack for six schillings a week. His exposure to the lives of those oppressed by the cruelty and injustice of the industrializing world drove him to depict aspects of society that had been shunted aside with an unprecedented level of detail and candor. His insight into human nature was well-rounded, however, and his tales are equally beloved for their qualities of generosity, faith, compassion, and triumph of good over evil.

Dickens married Catherine Thompson Hogarth in 1838, who bore him ten children. He separated from her in 1858 but did not divorce, maintaining her in a separate residence until her death. He narrowly escaped death in a railroad crash in 1865 when all the first class carriages save Dickens' plunged off a bridge under repair. After the incident his writing trailed off, and he went on tour giving readings of his bestsellers, which were immensely popular and notable for their passion and for his ability to portray the characters in unique voices.