

A Tale of Two Cities (Worksheet 1)

Exercise 1

Read the passage below about a meeting between a shoemaker and his visitors. You have 5 minutes to answer these questions:

Is the shoemaker healthy, or unhealthy? Is he mentally strong, or weak?

- 1 A broad ray of light fell into the garret, and showed the workman with an unfinished shoe
2 upon his lap, pausing in his labour. His few common tools and scraps of leather were at his
3 feet and on his bench. He had a white beard, raggedly cut, but not very long, a hollow face,
4 and exceedingly bright eyes. The hollowness and thinness of his face would have caused
5 them to look large, under his yet dark eyebrows and his confused white hair, though they
6 had been really otherwise; but, they were naturally large, and looked unnaturally so. His
7 yellow rags of shirt lay open at the throat, and showed his body to be withered and worn.
8 He, and his old canvas frock, and his loose stockings, and all his poor tatters of clothes, had,
9 in a long seclusion from direct light and air, faded down to such a dull uniformity of
10 parchment-yellow, that it would have been hard to say which was which.
- 11 He had put up a hand between his eyes and the light, and the very bones of it seemed
12 transparent. So he sat, with a steadfastly vacant gaze, pausing in his work. He never
13 looked at the figure before him, without first looking down this side of himself, then on that,
14 as if he had lost the habit of associating place with sound; he never spoke, without first
15 wandering in this manner, and forgetting to speak.
- 16 'Are you going to finish that pair of shoes to-day?' asked Defarge, motioning to Mr Lorry to
17 come forward.
- 18 'What did you say?'
- 19 'Do you mean to finish that pair of shoes to-day?'
- 20 'I can't say that I mean to. I suppose so. I don't know.'
- 21 But the question reminded him of his work, and he bent over it again.
- 22 My Lorry came silently forward, leaving the daughter by the door. When he had stood, for a
23 minute or two, by the side of Defarge, the shoemaker looked up. He showed no surprise at
24 seeing another figure, but the unsteady fingers of one of his hands strayed to his lips as he

25 looked at it (his lips and his nails were of the same pale lead-colour), and then the hand
26 dropped to his work, and he once more bent over the shoe. The look and the action had
27 occupied but an instant.

28 ‘You have a visitor, you see,’ said Monsieur Defarge.

29 ‘What did you say?’

30 ‘Here is a visitor.’

31 The shoemaker looked up as before, but without removing a hand from his work.

32 ‘Come!’ said Defarge. ‘Here is a monsieur, who knows a well-made shoe when he sees one.
33 Show him that shoe you are working at. Take it, monsieur.’

34 Mr Lorry took it in his hand.

35 ‘Tell monsieur what kind of shoe it is, and the maker’s name.’

36 There was a longer pause than usual, before the shoemaker replied:

37 ‘I forgot what it was you asked me. What did you say?’

38 ‘I said, couldn’t you describe the kind of shoe, for monsieur’s information?’

39 ‘It is a lady’s shoe. It is a young lady’s walking-shoe. It is in the present mode. I never saw
40 the present mode. I have a pattern in my hand.’ He glanced at the shoe with some little
41 passing touch of pride.

42 ‘And the maker’s name?’ said Defarge.

43 Now that he had no work to hold, he laid the knuckles of the right hand in the hollow of the
44 left, and then the knuckles of the left hand in the hollow of the right, and then passed a hand
45 across his bearded chin, and so on in regular changes, without a moment’s intermission.
46 The task of recalling him from the vacancy into which he always sank when he had spoken,
47 was like recalling some very weak person from a swoon, or endeavouring, in the hope of
48 some disclosure, to stay the spirit of a fast-dying man.

49 ‘Did you ask me for my name?’