A Tale of Two Cities: Book II, Chapter 4: Congratulatory

I. Notes

Central to the theme of doubles and mirror-images that runs through *A Tale of Two Cities* are the characters of Sideny Carton and Charles Darnay. The previous chapter established their physical similarities; this chapter establishes the differences in their temperaments. Where Darnay is polite, composed and a gentleman, Carton is ill-mannered, unkempt, and a heavy drinker. Dickens uses the contrast between the two men to emphasize the degree to which Carton is wasting his life, with Darnay serving as a representation of Carton’s unrealized possibilities.

II. Terms

Bastille- a state prison in Paris that held many prisoners indefinitely without trial; it was stormed and destroyed (1789) in the French Revolution: its destruction is commemorated on Bastille Day, July 14.

robing room- the room where judges and lawyers put on their official robes.

the reckoning- the bill.

winding sheet- a cloth in which the body of a dead person is wrapped for burial; shroud. Also refers to solidified candle drippings, signifying death.

III. Questions

1. How is Lucie described as “the golden thread?” Use text evidence to support your claim.

2. Dr. Manette’s PTSD shows up again in this chapter. Who triggers his episode? What do you think this suggests?

3. Where is Sidney Carton standing while everyone else is talking? Notice that his name is not mentioned until he starts talking. Why is this? Use text evidence to support your claim.

4. How would you describe the conversation between Carton and Darnay? Use text evidence to support your claim.

5. What suggestion does Dickens implant in the reader’s mind by the closing line of this chapter? Use text evidence to support you claim.