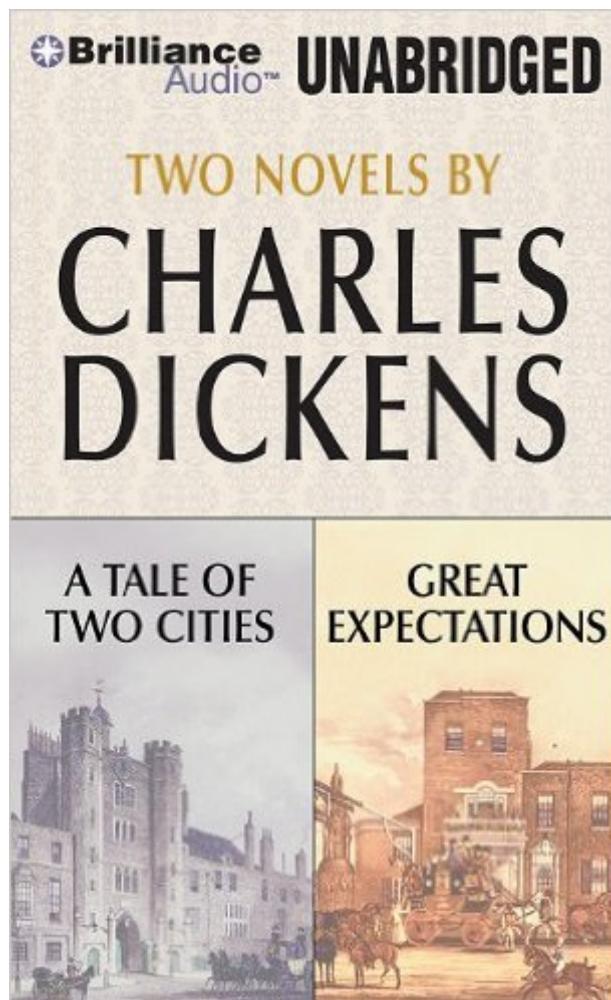


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# A Tale Of Two Cities And Great Expectations: Two Novels



## Synopsis

**A Tale of Two Cities:** The "two cities" are Paris in the time of the French Revolution, and London. Dr. Manette, a French physician, having been called in to treat a young peasant and his sister, realizes that they have been cruelly abused by the Marquis de St. Evremonde and his brother. To ensure Dr. Manette's silence, the Marquis has him confined for eighteen years in the Bastille. The doctor has just been released, demented, when the story opens. He is brought to England where he gradually recovers his health and his sanity. Charles Darnay, concealing under that false name his identity as the nephew of the cruel Marquis, has left France and renounced his heritage. He falls in love with Lucie, Dr. Manette's daughter, and they are happily married. During the Terror, he goes to Paris to save a servant condemned by the mob. Darnay himself is arrested, condemned to death, and is saved at the last moment by Sydney Carton, a reckless wastrel who acts out of devotion to Lucie. Carton smuggles Darnay out of prison and takes his place on the scaffold, declaring "It's a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done before," surely one of the most quoted lines in all the history of literature.

**Great Expectations:** Great Expectations chronicles the progress of Pip from childhood through adulthood. As he moves from the marshes of Kent to London society, he encounters a variety of extraordinary characters: from Magwitch, the escaped convict, to Miss Havisham and her ward, the arrogant and beautiful Estella. In this fascinating story, Dickens shows the dangers of being driven by a desire for wealth and social status. Pip must establish a sense of self against the plans which others seem to have for him and somehow discover a firm set of values and priorities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As usual, Oprah has picked a great book for her book club, only this time around she's recommending two books for the price of one, literally. And great books they both are. Charles Dickens is one of the towering authors of English literature. If you haven't read Dickens -- and I mean read, not just seen a movie -- you have a gaping hole in your knowledge and your literary experience. *A Tale of Two Cities* is generally considered the better of these two novels. Some have called it Dickens' greatest, which is saying something when one considers the entire body of work from this outstanding author. At heart, Dickens is a story teller and *A Tale of Two Cities* relates a gripping story set against the backdrop of the French Revolution and the sweeping intellectual, political and social changes of the Enlightenment period. The basics of the plot are relayed elsewhere, but I caution you not to read too much about the story line before you have read the novel, as one of the best features of Dickens is his ability to surprise and delight with the twists and turns of his plots and the events that challenge his characters. Great characters they always are too. *A Tale of Two Cities* is full of interesting peoples, as well as events. Sydney Carton, for example, is on my list of the ten best fictional heros of all time. (See my list here on .) While *Great Expectations* is not as highly regarded as *A Tale of Two Cities*, it remains an outstanding novel. Think of *Great Expectations* as the Cadillac to *A Tale of Two Cities*' Rolls Royce. There's nothing wrong with a Caddy and *Great Expectations* delivers on all of the fronts you'd expect.

With *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations* as the new Oprah book selection, we have two very different styles of Dickens. My preference is *Great Expectations*, although many love *A Tale of Two Cities* also, as it is often read in high school. *A Tale of Two Cities* lacks the comic relief that most of the Dickens novels have, and there aren't many "Dickens-like" characters within the story. Also, *A Tale of Two Cities* is pretty cut and dry within its characterization; good guys are clearly good guys, and bad guys are the villains, and there isn't any gray area to speak of. Still, there is power with the message of what revenge and war bring. Within *Great Expectations* there is much more depth and dimensionality to the characters, both good and bad. I think that any Dickens novel has merit, and should be read because of its moral, message, themes and social commentaries. Now, you get two in one book. *A Tale of Two Cities* centers on the English/French revolutionary war. We have our heroes (Charles Darnay, Sydney Carton) and villains (Madame Defarge and her revolutionaries). *A Tale of Two Cities* is a little different than most Dickens' novels in that it is more action-based and has a bleak, bloody perspective, being that it bases much of its tale on the historical aspects of war. The restless, chaotic nature between the two sides lends its way to various modes of revenge from many characters. Maybe one question explored is "are there times when

revenge is acceptable, or does it always destroy the individual?" Also, differences between classes are evidenced as some poor go without while others prosper and live luxurious lives.

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