



Talk Show: *A Tale of Two Cities*

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Language Arts
Grades 9-12



Introduction

There are themes to be found in almost everything we read. Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, is no different. In this lesson, students will research the various themes found within the novel. Then, students will gather in small groups to participate in a "talk show" to present and debate the various themes.

Learning Objectives

- Students will determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. ([Common Core State Standards: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#))
- Students will initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. ([Common Core State Standards: ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1](#))

Materials Needed

- Journals/notebooks
- Laptops/computers

Procedure

Prior to beginning this lesson, students should have read *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens.

1. Ask students to recall the definition of **theme**. Review the definition of theme with the class.
2. On the board, display the graphic below. Ask students to brainstorm independently for roughly 3 minutes about the themes presented in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Students may use journals/notebooks to jot down their ideas. When time is up, ask students to contribute their ideas about the novel's theme through a whole class discussion. Add the themes that are correctly identified from the novel to the board. The main themes found in *A Tale of Two Cities* (discuss each):
 - Fate
 - Social injustice
 - Social class struggle
 - New life/resurrection
 - Family

Continued on page 2



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Continued from page 1

3. Assign each student a theme (try to distribute themes as evenly as possible). For the next 15-20 minutes, students should research their assigned themes and find supporting evidence from the text. Students may additionally use laptops/computers to aid in their search for evidence.
4. After students have completed their research, divide students into small groups. Make sure that all group members represent different themes from the novel. Now, it is time to begin the “talk show.” Students will discuss their individual themes from the novel and argue the validity of each. As in any good talk show, members should ask questions and politely agree or disagree with statements that are made. Encourage students to employ the use of evidence from the text more often than personal opinions. Allow groups to “debate” their themes for roughly 15 minutes.
5. To close the lesson, students should answer the following questions: Which theme from *A Tale of Two Cities* is the most prominent? Which theme is the most important in relation to today’s world?

Evaluation

Student work should be evaluated through the completion of the closing activity. Students are asked to respond to two questions:

1. Which theme from *A Tale of Two Cities* is the most prominent?
2. Which theme is the most important in relation to today’s world?

Students should thoroughly explain their stance with the use of evidence from the text and real world examples/ current events.

Extension: This closing activity can be converted into a written essay that is completed at home or during the next class period.