

Chp. 1: Five Years Later

Vocabulary

Incommodious-uncomfortable

Extemporized- improvised

Urchin- mischievous youngster

Deprecated- expressed disapproval of

Reversionary- relating to the act of
returning, turning back

Cogitated- pondered, meditated

Summary: it's 1780. That's five years after the first section (as you might be able to tell from the name of the chapter, "Five Years Later"). We just thought we should point it out. Tellson's Bank in London prides itself on being "very small, very dark, very ugly, very incommodious." Were it more welcoming, the bank's partners believe, it would lose its status as a respectable business. The funny thing is that it's also the most respected bank in England. In fact, all of its partners revel in the fact that it's small, ugly, old, and dirty. They're small, ugly, and old themselves. They might even be dirty. It is located by Temple Bar, the spot where, until recently, the government displayed the heads of executed criminals. The narrator explains that at this time, "death was a recipe much in vogue," used against all manner of criminals, from forgers to horse thieves to counterfeiters. Dickens spends a good deal of time describing the smallness, ugliness, oldness, etc., of the bank.

Why? Well, Dickens's style tends to focus on the tiny details that construct everyday life in London. Since most of this novel is set in France, he doesn't have too many opportunities to catalog life in London. He's making the most of the chances he has. In a typically sneaky Dickensian move, the narrator transitions from talking about Tellson's to meditating on the state of justice in England. Dickens always gives his social commentary on issues he finds unjust. He does this with parody, satire and irony. His tone gives clues to his attitude about these issues.

As he says, putting people to death has become the answer for everything: murders and petty thieves tend to get the same punishment, regardless of how unjust this seems to be. Come to think of it, our narrator seems to think that the whole system is pretty unjust.

After the critique of the broken justice system, we're introduced to Jerry Cruncher. He's the odd-jobs man at Tellson's. When we catch up with him, however, he's not at Tellson's. He's at home. And he's really, really pissed off. You see, his wife is a religious woman. She's often on her knees, praying to God. This upsets Mr. Cruncher. He thinks that his wife is praying against him.

In fact, he's certain that her "flopping" down on her knees is another way for her to undermine his efforts to become a respectable businessman. He beats up on his wife for a while: he throws his muddy boot at her, and then he lectures his son about the sins of his mother. Dickens cleverly alerts you that Jerry can go to bed with clean boots but he wakes up and they're muddy. **Hmmm.** Asking his son to keep a close eye on Mrs. Cruncher in case she starts to "flop" again, he sits down to eat breakfast.

Around nine, he and his son head to Tellson's. Jerry and Jerry Jr. (that's his son, by the way) look remarkably alike. We just thought we should mention it. It's a handy bit of information that just might be useful later. As soon as they get to Tellson's, someone from the bank calls for a porter. Jerry Jr. gets really excited. When an indoor messenger calls for a porter, Cruncher takes off to do the job. As young Jerry sits alone, he wonders why his father's fingers always have rust on them. **Hmm #2.**

Chp. 2: A Sight

Vocabulary

Proviso- qualifying clause, stipulation

Superscribed- wrote on the outside of a letter

Summary: Jerry Cruncher heads into the bank to figure out what his assignment for the day will be. An old bank clerk sends him to the courts with a note for Mr. Lorry. Apparently, Mr. Lorry just wants Jerry to hang around as a messenger for him at the court. Interested in the prospect of some excitement at the court, Jerry asks the clerk what sort of trial will be held today. It's a trial for treason.

That means that the accused will be drawn and quartered. Jerry's pretty excited. We interrupt this summary for a quick history announcement: Drawing and quartering is the traditional punishment for high treason in the U.K. Remember the ending of Braveheart? That's drawing and quartering. First, convicted traitors were hanged until they were almost dead. Then they were disemboweled. Then they were beheaded. And their bodies were cut into four parts. In other words, it wasn't all that pleasant. It wasn't all that much better for women at the time, either. They weren't beheaded: they were burned at the stake.

Back to our story...Mr. Jerry Cruncher is actually pretty excited about the prospect of a high treason case. Chances are that the guy will get hanged—whether or not he's innocent. Cruncher heads to the court. Mr. Lorry's already there.

The court itself is packed to the gills. Apparently everyone loves a treason case as much as Cruncher does. Also, everyone loves a good drink. The place reeks of alcohol. Hmm... sounds more like Judge Judy than Law and Order? Well, perhaps. We're not really sure if this is supposed to be a court or a circus. In the center of all the hubbub is the prisoner.

He's going to be central to the story, so we'll spend some time introducing him. He's about twenty-five. He appears to be a gentleman. Oh, and did we mention that he's really good-looking? Well, he is. Although he appears to be a little bit shaken to be in the middle of a three-ring circus, Charles Darnay, a handsome, well-bred young man, stands trial for treason. Cruncher understands little of the legal jargon, but he gleans that Darnay has been charged with divulging secret information to the king of France (Louis XVI): namely, that England plans to send armed forces to fight in the American colonies. This man does not appear to be the treasonous type. Of course, that doesn't stop the rest of the spectators in the court from mentally hanging, drawing, and quartering the guy before he's even been tried—everyone, that is, except for a young woman and a distinguished-looking older man.

As Darnay looks to the young lady and her distinguished father, a whisper rushes through the courtroom, speculating on the identity of the two. Eventually, Cruncher discovers that they will serve as witnesses against the prisoner. Lucie and her father, Dr. Alexandre Manette. As it turns out, they happen to be the key witnesses in the case against Darnay. What? Stay Tuned!

Analysis: The courtroom scenes that open the second book of the novel allow Dickens to use a wonderful range of language. He employs a narration technique known as free indirect style, which fuses third-person narration with an interior point of view. He reveals the charges for which Darnay is being tried while rooting the reader in the uneducated mind (and ear) of the spectators: "*Charles Darnay had yesterday pleaded Not Guilty to an indictment denouncing him (with infinite jingle and jangle) for that he was a false traitor to our serene, illustrious, excellent, and so forth, prince. . . .*" The juxtaposition of formal ("*our serene, illustrious, excellent*") and informal ("*and so forth*")

speech produces a comical effect by highlighting the unrefined crowd's zealous craving for the juicy details of the case, even as they recognize the decorum of their setting.

Dickens also uses these scenes to implement another of his favorite literary devices, parody. The Attorney-General's long, self-important, and bombastic speech at the opening of Chapter 3 offers a highly comical imitation of legalese and serves indirectly to ridicule the Attorney-General, as well as the entire legal system. Thus the Attorney-General informs the jury: *[I]f statues were decreed in Britain, as in ancient Greece and Rome, to public benefactors, this shining citizen [his witness] would assuredly have one. That, as they were not so decreed, he probably would not have one.*

The Attorney-General melodramatically touts the virtues of his witness, John Barsad, and absurdly deifies him, makes him appear like a god, as though Barsad were a great figure from antiquity. When he explains that Barsad would not in fact have such a statue erected in his honor, as no such practice exists in England, his words again produce a comical effect. They draw attention to the fact that the attorney's first sentence glorified Barsad to the point of irrelevant hypotheticals. Moreover, the redundant nature of the Attorney-General's statement highlights his obliviousness to the emptiness of his words.

The passage makes clear how Dickens's comical characterizations have won him the admiration of generations of readers. Dickens's most "Dickensian" novels abound with hilariously grotesque characters, whose speech (usually vulgar) and appearance (usually freakish) are rendered with extreme exaggeration. With his impeded speech, violent temper, mysteriously rusty fingers, and muddy boots, Jerry Cruncher comes as close as any other character to this sort of caricature.

In addition to the caricature of Cruncher and the Attorney General, Darnay makes as uninteresting a hero as Lucie does a heroine. Both characters prove rather one-dimensional in their goodness and virtue. Only the supposedly loveless Carton promises more depth. He descends into the darkness of alcoholism while others bask in the glow of Darnay's acquittal. Reading of this, one cannot help but suspect that elaborate secrets dim his past.

Allusions, Literary Devices and Questions

#	Item	Pgs.	Explanation
1	Three characteristics of the bank:		
2	Dickens's style focuses on:	Guide	
3	Dickens's Social Commentary:	Guide	
4			Praying= Flopping
5			The Honest Tradesman, or in other words, "Respectable Businessman"
6	Drawing and Quartering	Guide	
7		Guide	Dickens's narration technique in Chp. 1, Book the Second
8	Parody Definition	Guide	
9	Parody Example used here:	Guide	
10		Guide	"Dickensian" characterization
11	One-dimensional goodness	Guide	
12	Foreshadowing to Carton's past	Guide	