

The Nineteenth-Century Novel
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Lecture – 19
A Tale of Two Cities Book I; Chapters 4-6

Hello and welcome to week five's lecture. In today's session, we will be looking closely at chapters 4 to 6 which are from book 1. In the previous sessions we saw how Dickens had condensed a lot of themes in the first couple of chapters, and today we will be looking at some of the key incidents which will set the narrative ball rolling.

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Mr Jarvis Lorry

- A face habitually suppressed and quieted, was still lighted up under the quaint wig by a pair of moist bright eyes that it must have cost their owner, in years gone by, some pains to drill to the composed and reserved expression of Tellson's Bank.

Mr Lorry
↳ personifies
↓
Tellson's Bank
emotion
Setting: a hotel

In this chapter; in chapter 4, we are introduced once again to Mr. Jarvis Lorry, a banker whom we first saw in the first few chapters. And we get a good set of description about his physical personality as well as his mental makeup. This is what the third person narrator has to say about Mr. Jarvis Lorry, the banker from Tellson and Co. The narrator says, “A face habitually suppressed and quieted, was still lighted up under the quaint wig by a pair of moist bright eyes that it must have cost their owner, in years gone by, some pains to drill to the composed and reserved expression of Tellson’s bank.”

A quick reading of this excerpt tells us that there is a symbolic connection between Tellson’s bank and the employee of that bank Mr. Jarvis Lorry. Now let us take this excerpt very slowly and see what are the qualities that we can elicit, get, about Mr. Lorry. Here we see that his face is constantly suppressed.

It is a very interesting choice of word, and quieted, there is a sedate impression about Mr. Jarvis Lorry and it is something that he has got through years of experience. Though he is very serene, sedate and quiet, he is still possessing the quality of spiritedness, there is still some light about him, and that is indicated by a pair of moist bright eyes. Therein lies the emotion with regard to this man Mr. Lorry.

So, it is the eyes that reveal that sentiment, that emotion in his person. And the narrator further says that it has not been easy for Mr. Lorry to come up with this kind of serene attitude about him, he guesses that it must have cost this man a lot to kind of compose himself to, train himself to produce this reserved expression. And this reserved expression is significant because that is the attitude, the perception that Tellson's bank wants to convey to its customers.

There is nothing connected to emotion or impulse about the bank, it is full of business. So the point that we must take away from this excerpt is that Mr. Lorry personifies the principles associated with Tellson's bank, which have offices both in London and in Paris. This description about Mr. Lorry is discussed in the context of the hotel as a setting in this particular novel.

That is something we need to remember, because at this hotel we will have Miss Manette who is coming by to visit Mr. Lorry and they too are going to embark on a journey which will recover somebody important for this novel.


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Miss Manette

- "a short, slight, pretty figure, a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes that met his own with an inquiring look, and a forehead with a singular capacity (remembering how young and smooth it was), of lifting and knitting itself into an expression that was not quite one of perplexity, or of wonder, or alarm, or merely of a bright fixed attention, though it included all four expressions..."

golden = good

benign = not evil



Miss Manette, as I said just now, is going to visit Mr. Lorry, she has just arrived at the hotel called George and she is asked, she has asked permission to meet this gentleman. And when they meet, Mr. Lorry notices that she is a short, slight, pretty figure, a quantity of golden hair, a pair of blue eyes that met his own with an inquiring look, and a forehead with a singular capacity (remembering how young and smooth it was) of lifting and knitting itself into an expression that was not quite one of perplexity, or of wonder, or alarm, or merely of a bright, fixed attention though it included all four expressions.

This description of Miss Manette has in connection with the description of Mr. Jarvis Lorry in one particular aspect which is the colour of the eyes. A pair of blue eyes is something that Miss Manette and Mr. Lorry have in common. We can also assume that this is quite a British trait, and which is also associated with something benign, not evil.

I would like you to pay attention to the colour of the eyes, because when you come to take a look at some of the other characters in Paris and in the countryside of France, you will notice that certain characters have dark eyes, and dark eyes symbolized darkness, the element of evil within them, so which is why I am pointing out this aspect of Miss Manette and Mr. Lorry's description. So, she is very, very slight, she is very slim, she is short, she is pretty, the ideal of what is considered to be beauty in those days, in the Victorian period as well as in the late 18th century.

And she has a quantity, a good amount of golden hair. Golden colour is also very significant in this novel because once again, gold is associated with benign aspects of life, something that is good and not evil. Again, please make a contrast between the colour of the hair of Miss Manette as well as the other central female character Madame Defarge, and notice what sort of hair she has, what kind of colour of hair does she possess because that will tell you about the contrast the Dickens is trying to strike between these two central female characters.

So this lady, this girl she is very young, she is not 20, so this woman has come to Mr. Lorry to seek his assistance in recovering somebody who is very, very important to her. And she is perplexed, she is confused and that is indicated through the appearance of her forehead.

Look at the way the narrator describes it. The narrator says that there is a knitting going on in her forehead, and once again the word knitting is very important to remember because we

will see one other female character who is literally knitting constantly, obsessively and we need to find out in terms of the record that she is trying to keep. So knitting is an important element that is happening in the novel, and symbolically that kind of knitting is indicated in the forehead of Miss Manette who is perplexed by the state of affairs she finds herself in. She is also possessing a lot of emotions which is not clearly one particular thing, it is a combination of confusion, of wonder, of alarm, and at the same time, she is also very acutely observing the environment around her. So Miss Manette is a figure who evokes a lot of empathy on the part of the person who is next to her as well as from the readers.

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A Man of Business

- Miss Manette, I am a man of business. I have business charge to acquit myself of. In your reception of it, don't heed me any more than if I was a speaking machine—truly, I am not much else. I will with your leave, relate to you, miss, the story of one of our customers.

*distance
himself
↳ Miss Manette
↳ professionalism*

Surface vs Depth

This is what Mr. Lorry has to say to Miss Manette, and I want you to remember the idea of the lack of sentiment within Mr. Lorry. That is what he advertises, he says that I have no sentiment, I have no emotion, I am a man of business. So he says, “Miss Manette, I am a man of business, I have business charge to acquit myself of. In your reception of it, do not heed me any more than if I was a speaking machine, truly I am not much else. I will with your leave, relate to you, miss, the story of one of her customers.”

So, Mr. Lorry is trying to eliminate any and every kind of emotion from that scene, he does not want to strike a connection with this little girl who is clearly helpless, who was confused, who is kind of alarmed, who is awestruck by the situation she finds herself in, and Mr. Lorry is trying to distance himself from Miss Manette. And we need to make a connection here between Mr. Lorry's professed sentiment and the connection that kind of attitude has with Tellson's bank itself, they are trying to be very, very professional, that is the theory.

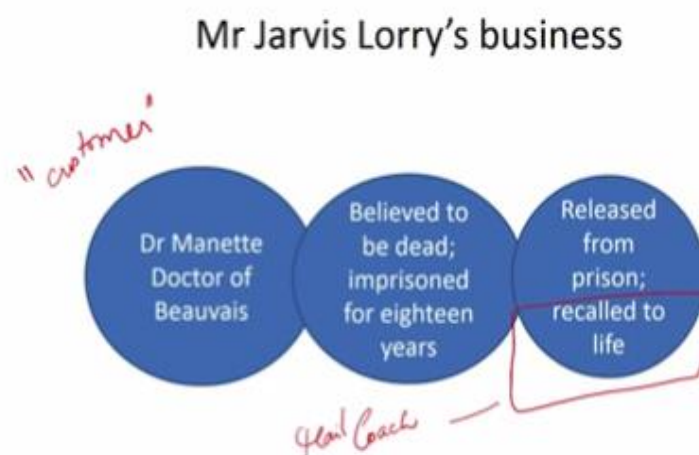
So, there is also an assumption that professionalism means the desire to weed out any kind of personal relationships. Even though this is the desire of Mr. Lorry, as well as the desire of Tellson's bank, we can see clearly through the way the novel unravels that both Mr. Lorry and Tellson's bank do perform a lot of personal service towards their customers. So that is one aspect we need to remember.

But coming to this particular excerpt, he says that I am a man of business, do not expect any kind of personal assistance, and he says that I am just going to tell you the story of one of our customers. And the other phrase that I want you to pay attention here is the speaking machine, this phrase indicates once again the lack of human element in the dialogue, in the conversation that is going to happen between the two.

So, he says that do not even consider me as a human being, think of me as a speaking machine who has a job to perform, a business charge to acquit, to deliver, to perform to satisfaction and nothing else, I am not much else. So this is the theory that Mr. Lorry constantly spouts, but as the novel progresses, we will see that he tries to bring in the personal element too. So we need not be taken in by the claims, the superficial attitudes thrown about by certain characters.

So, there is a difference between surface and depth, which again is one other theme that we should constantly pay attention too.

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So, what exactly is Mr. Jarvis Lorry's business? His business relates to a customer called Doctor Manette, he is a doctor from Beauvais, a place in France, and this doctor is believed to

be dead so far but in fact, he had been imprisoned for 18 long years. This matter is quite unknown to many, and now there is information received by Mr. Lorry that he has been released from prison.

And in other words, we can consider that as being recalled to life. So this is the matter which had been preoccupying Mr. Lorry during his travel to Dover in the mail coach, and that is the message he offers to Jerry “recalled to life”, and that message is delivered to Mademoiselle, Miss Manette and she has come to meet Mr. Lorry with regard to this business of recovering somebody who has been considered to be dead or buried.

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“Secret Service”

- Better not to mention the subject, anywhere or in any way, and to remove him—for a while at all events—out of France. Even I, safe as an Englishman, and even Tellson's, important as they are to French credit avoid all naming of the matter. I carry about me, not a scrap of writing openly referring to it. This is a secret service altogether.

So, this is the secret service that Mr. Lorry is advised to take upon himself by Tellson and Co for the benefit of one of its customers, Doctor Manette. And he says to Miss Manette that she is not supposed to mention the subject. “Better not mention the subject, anywhere or in any way, and to remove him for a while at all events out of France. Even I, safe as an Englishman, and even Tellson's, important as they are to French credit, avoid all naming of the matter. I carry about me not a scrap of writing openly referring to it. This is a secret service altogether.”

So, this except clearly tells us that the job that Mr. Lorry is going to perform is of a very confidential character, and he says that even mentioning it to several people will bring danger to him and to those who mention it. So he says that do not talk about it to anybody, and not in England not in France. Even though I am a member of Tellson's bank in France, it is not ideal to mention it anywhere.

And he says that I do not carry even a piece of writing which refers to this secret service. And what is significant about this except here is the reference to a scrap of writing, he says that this job that I am going to undertake is not written down, it is not in a piece of paper, and this novel tells us that writings become evidence, letters become evidence and that evidence will bring some kind of danger and downfall to some of the people involved in it.

So, writing is suppressed. So this is the message that he has to offer to Miss Manette, this is the secret service. So even though he is an Englishman, even though he is a banker, even though France has a branch of Tellson's, even though Tellson is important to the French nation, despite all these significances, the man that they are going to save is part of a job that might bring about a lot of danger to those who want to help him.

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Miss Manette and Mr. Lorry interrupted
Harry Furniss; 1910



Now, once Miss Manette hears about all the details which relate to her father, because that is the man they are going to recover from a place in France, she is struck by the suddenness of all the personal revelations, and she is fainting. And once she faints, we have a new character who just comes in upon them and helps Miss Manette, so that is represented in that illustration by Harry Furniss.

And the illustration was done in 1910 for an edition of the novel. So this is Mr. Lorry and this is Miss Manette and this is Miss Pross, who is a kind of a maid and the chaperone for Miss Manette. So when Lorry gives her a lot of information, the daughter understands that the father is no longer in person but has been released and he is right now in the home of a man called Defarge who runs an inn, a wine shop in St. Antoine.

So all these information are provided to her by Mr. Lorry and she is struck by it and she swoons, and Miss Pross who is fiercely protective of Miss Manette whom she calls ladybird, intervenes and shouts at the banker and at other people and calls for help.

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Chapter V: The Wine Shop

Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask, had acquired a
tigerish smear about the mouth; and one tall joker so besmirched, his
head more out of a long squalid bag of a nightcap than it, scrawled upon
a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees—BLOOD.

SYMBOLIC WINE = BLOOD
FORESHADOWING



Now, let us look at the chapter called the wine shop, a place of business run by the Defarges. And at the beginning of this chapter, we see a big cask of wine breaking and the wine spills onto the street and the wine runs everywhere and that is the premise of this particular chapter. And the people in the streets run out and try to drink the wine in all kinds of manner, and we get a sense that they are deprived of food, they do not enjoy any of the comforts of life, they are a hungry lot.

And even when the wine is spilt on the ground, they do not want to let it go to waste and try to consume it. Men, women and even children are given whatever wine that could be collected from the muddy floors of France. And this is what the narrator has to say about some of the people who very hungrily consume the drink.

“Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask had acquired a tigerish smear about the mouth, and one tall joker so besmirched, his head more out of a long scarlet bag of a nightcap than in it, scrawled upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees: BLOOD.” So when the people tried to drink the wine from wherever they could get it out, they assumed a kind of a tigerish smear because of the blood that gets stuck on their face, their faces are all stained by this reddish colour drink.

And one man who is so stained by the wine that is flowing on the street is trying to write this word called blood on a wall, and he uses his finger to write on the wall and he dips the finger into muddy wine and does this action. It is a very, very symbolic action in this story and we are easily able to see the figurative association between wine and blood. And there is a suggestion that one day not in the distant future, blood will flow in the streets of France.

So that kind of foreshadowing is also performed in this particular scene. Now, there is also another important assumption that we need to pay attention to. The person who is writing this particular word is also likely to be the one, or people like him are the likely set of people to kind of spill blood in the streets of France. So those are the symbolic messages that this scene is trying to commit.

And when he does write this word blood on the wall, we have the wine shop owner Defarge come and intervene and ask him not to do it. He says that why cannot you write it elsewhere, preferably write that word on your heart rather than on the wall, because that will be noticed by the authorities and then there will be trouble. So this is a very symbolic chapter, a chapter that needs to be read and reread.

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Chapter V: The Wine Shop



As I mentioned a while ago, there is a lot of hunger among the peasants of France. Hunger was prevalent everywhere, people were starving, there was not enough food to go around, and in this chapter, Dickens personifies hunger, hunger becomes men and women, hunger becomes a

figure that stared down from the smokeless chimneys and stared down from the filthy street that had no offer among its refuse of anything to eat.

So, hunger becomes a human being that is looking down from chimneys which do not smoke because there is no food cooked, and hunger tries to find out if there is anything to eat among the rubbish that is lying about, that is flowing in the gutters of the countryside, so there is nothing to be had. And it is in this context that the breaking of a wine cask which lets out a lot of wine into the street becomes significant.

In one sense it offers the people something to drink for free, that is one interpretation, the other interpretation is that symbolically people will consume the blood of society in the future because they have had nothing to satiate themselves with.

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Chapter V: The Wine Shop

- "In the hunted air of the people there was yet some wild-beast thought of the possibility of turning at bay"
- For the time was to come, when the gaunt scarecrows of that region should have watched the lamplighter, in their idleness and hunger, so long, as to conceive the idea of improving on this method, and hauling up men by those ropes and pulleys, to flare upon the darkness of their condition. But the time was not come yet; and every wind that blew over France shook the rags of the scarecrows in vain, for the birds, fine of song and feather, took no warning.

Peasants

aristocrats

St. Antoine



Then this chapter, the wine shop, also offers a kind of a fabric which kind of tells us that this is an important location in the narrative of A Tale of Two Cities. And the way the ambience is described also once again metaphorically tells us that it is the perceptions of the people that fills the air of St. Antoine. The narrator says that, "In the hunted air of the people there was yet some wild beasts thought of the possibility of turning at bay."

So, even the air of St. Antoine communicates this message that at one point of time, the wild beast in the people in the countryside will turn to attack its pursuers. There will come a time when the hunted will turn to hunt the people who have been hunting them so far. So the

moment for retribution will come the, moment for vengeance will come, the moment for taking revenge will come on the part of the peasants, the hungry, that underprivileged.

“For the time was to come when the gaunt scarecrows of that region should have watched the lamplighter in the idleness and hunger so long as to conceive the idea of improving on this method, and hauling up men by those ropes and pulleys to flare upon the darkness of the condition. But the time was not come yet, and every wind that blew over France shook the rags of the scarecrows in vain, for the birds, fine of song and feather, took no warning.”

This excerpt is also very important because there is a symbolic connection that is being drawn between the activity of lighting a lamp using ropes and pulleys, and the concept of the guillotine which will also work with the help of ropes and pulleys. But while in the one case lamps are being lit, in the other cases, lights of human beings are shut out in a very horrific and brutal manner.

So, the narrator tries to tell us that the people, the peasants of France have become inspired or are beginning to become inspired by the concept of lamp lighting and because of the straitened circumstances, because of the brutality that they are undergoing on a daily basis, they will come to discover the concept of the guillotine which will haul up men by those ropes and pulleys, and it will hang people, and that death will light up the darkness of the condition.

People who are privileged, people who have exploited the peasants will die deaths by hanging by the guillotine, and their deaths will light up the darkness of the condition of the peasantry. So but that time has not come yet, it is not time yet for that time to come, for the revolution to come, and every wind that blew over France shook this rags of the scarecrows in vain.

The scarecrows are the peasants, the people who have nothing to live by. And the reference to the birds of fine song and feather are the reference to the aristocrats, who will pay dearly when the time for the revolution has come. And the narrator tells us that the aristocrats have not taken any kind of warning from the state of affairs that is oppressing the rural regions of France.

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Defarge; Harry Furniss 1910



*tough
hardy*

This is the physical description of Defarge illustrated by Harry Furniss in the year 1910. So this is a 20th century description, and Defarge is a burly man and he looks very confident, he has his overcoat slung on one side and he has a, you know, a very piercing set of eyes and curly hair, and he is not somebody you want to meet with in a dark alley. So that impression is conveyed through this illustration of Harry Furniss.

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Defarge, the wine-shop keeper

- The wine-shop keeper was a bull-necked, martial-looking man of thirty, and he should have been of a hot temperament, for although it was a bitter day, he wore no coat, but carried one slung over his shoulder....Good-humoured looking on the whole, but implacable-looking too; evidently a man of a strong resolution and a set purpose; a man not desirable to be met, rushing down a narrow pass with a gulf on either side, for nothing would turn the man.

Now, let us look at the textual description of Defarge, the wine-shop keeper. “The wine-shop keeper was a bull necked, martial looking man of thirty, and he should have been of a hot temperament, for although it was a bitter day, he wore no coat, but carried one slung over his shoulder. Good-humoured looking on the whole, but implacable looking too, evidently a man of a strong resolution and a set purpose, a man not desirable to be met rushing down a narrow path with the gulf on either side, for nothing would turn the man.”

So, we can get a list of specific characteristics about Defarge, a description that will put the fear of God in the person who is looking at him. So he is a man who is physically very tough, and that sense is given by this illustration too, tough, hardy. And he looks like he is a man who is ready for a fight and he looks hot-tempered too, quick to become angry, and the narrator says that even though it is a cold day, he is not wearing his coat, that tells him that the harsher elements of nature is not having any impact on his physique.

And he looks good humoured on the whole, at the surface, you know, he does not seem as if he is threatening but he is also very implacable, you cannot make him compromise, he is not going to change his mind, he is a man of strong resolution and a set purpose, he has a definite aim in life and you do not want to meet him on a narrow path because he will not turn for you, he will not make, you know, concessions for the other.

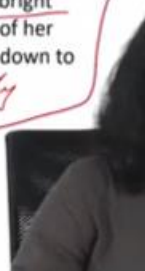
So, this description is very significant because it gives a very fair idea of the kind of man Mr. Defarge the owner of the wine shop is.

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Madame Defarge *Miss Manette*

- "a stout woman of about his own age, with a watchful eye that seldom seemed to look at anything, a large heavily ringed, a steady face, strong features, and great composure of manner. There was a character about Madame Defarge from which one might have predicted that she did not often make mistakes against herself in any of the reckonings over she presided. Madame Defarge being sensitive to cold, was wrapped in fur, and had a quantity of bright shawl twined about her head, though not the concealment of her large earrings. Her knitting was before her, but she had laid down to pick her teeth with a toothpick."

Composure
the story
Coded message
rich - fringes also comfortably



Now, let us look at the qualities, physical and emotional, of Madame Defarge, his wife. Madame Defarge is a key character in a Tale of Two Cities, and I would say that she is a foil to Miss Manette. And I would like you to make a comparison between the physical description of Miss Manette and Madame Defarge, and you will see that there is a binary element to this pair of characters in the novel, each of them signifying something that is distinct, that is very, very polar to one another.

She is, Madame Defarge is “a stout woman of about his own age, about 30 years of age, with a watchful eye that seldom seemed to look at anything, a large heavily ringed, a steady face, strong features and great composure of manner. There was a character about Madame Defarge from which one might have predicted that she did not often make mistakes against herself in any of the reckonings over which she presided. Madame Defarge being sensitive to cold was wrapped in fur and had a quantity of bright shawl twined about her head, though not the concealment of her large earrings. Her knitting was before her, but she had laid down to pick her teeth with a tooth pick.”

It is a wonderful paragraph in the sense that it tells you variety of interesting things about this woman. she is more or less of the same age as her husband Mr. Defarge, and while Mr. Defarge, he is not affected by cold, so he is not wearing his coat, but Madame Defarge is wearing a lot of stuff, she has wrapped herself because she does feel a lot of cold. And there is a reference to that aspect here, Madame Defarge being sensitive to cold. So, we do get a lot of differences between the husband and the wife, and that is something to be noticed because as the novel progresses, we will see how they converge in terms of certain significant political affairs, and how they come to a stage towards the end of the novel where they become divergent politically. So these descriptive markers are important in that regard. So while the husband is not wearing a coat and this woman is wrapped in fur, what does that tell us about Madame Defarge? It tells us that she is rich, at least she is very comfortable financially, the fact that she can wear fur.

And I would like you to contrast Madame Defarge's clothing with the kind of clothes the other people, the peasants of France put on themselves. Now let us look at other aspects, she is very watchful, she does have a watchful eye, but she does not look at anything, you know, in particular, she does not seem to look at anything in particular. So, it is a very sly manner that she has in observing things, she is watchful, but you cannot watch her watching anything in particular.

And that quality is something that we need to keep in mind about Madame Defarge, she is quietly observant and she has a lot of rings on her hands and she is heavily ringed, once again suggesting that she is very wealthy, financially very comfortable. And again she has strong

features like her husband, set features with definite purpose, but then she is also very composed. And this composure, whom does it remind you of, can you tell?

There is a similarity with regard to composure with Mr. Lorry who is also very composed, very sedate, very measured. So there is also a point in the novel when illustrations of Madame Defarge can be compared to the illustrations of Mr. Lorry. So she is similar to the banker in that regard, and another point of similarity is the fact that both of them are accountants of one kind or another.

Mr. Lorry is a banker whereas Madame Defarge is the one who sits at the till of her shop, the wine shop, she is the one who does the accounts, she calculates the money that has come into the shop and the narrator says that she did not often make mistakes against herself in any of the accounts that she does. So, she is a woman who does not make mistakes that is also something that we need to keep in mind.

She is almost nearly perfect in that regard and there is also a parallel to Mr. Lorry in this matter. And as I mentioned, she is slightly rich and that is suggested in the amount of you know cloth that is on her, she has a lot of shawls; bright shawls, she is wearing bright shawls which are wrapped up about her head too, and even though the shawl covers the head, they do not cover the large earrings, once again pointing to her financial status.

And most importantly, she knits, she is a woman who is identified by her knitting, she is constantly found to be knitting but in this case, she has put the knitting down and she is picking her teeth with the toothpick. And we need to remember that whatever Madame Defarge does in this novel is significant because they are open to symbolic interpretation.

So, at this point she is picking her teeth with a toothpick and that may say something about the wine-shop to her husband. So this picking her teeth could also be a code; a coded message to her husband that something is different in the wine shop. Thank you for watching, I will

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