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## RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS BETWEEN FRENCH REVOLUTION AND CHARLES DICKENS'S NOVEL *A Tale of Two Cities*

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### Abstract

A breath of a literary work is always related to the psychological and sociological conditions of society's life in an era where the literary works were created. The existence of certain conditions that affect a literary work, it makes literature in the form of prose, poetry and drama can be studied with various approaches. In general, the study of a literary work is often done with two very popular approaches, namely psychological approach and sociological approach. The linkage of literary works as a reflection of a social life proves that a literary work always has partiality. Thus it can be said that literary work is a tendentious work which means having certain purposes behind its creation. This study analyzes the relevance of social conditions in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* which is then associated with the history of the French revolution. This research uses the approach of literary sociology by focusing on historical theory and theory about social conflict. The data were collected by using taking note and close reading. This research shows that there are many similar social conditions between Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and the history of the French revolution. The similarities of social conditions occurred in the pre-revolutionary, revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods.

**Keywords:** Sociological Approach, Literary Work, Social Conflict, Relevance, French Revolution

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### Introduction

In the 21st century literary has begun to grow widely with various genres. The development of literary works is due to the development of thinking patterns and studies that exist today. Even so, it does not mean the classical literary work is a less interesting work. In essence, a breath of a literary work is always related to the psychological and sociological conditions of society's life in an era where the literary works were created. The existence of certain conditions that affect a literary work, it makes literature in the form of prose, poetry and drama can be studied with various approaches.

In general, the study of a literary work is often done with two very popular approaches, namely psychological approach and sociological approach. The study of literature with a psychological approach is an assessment of literary works associated with psychological problems in the work. While the study of

literature with the sociological approach is an assessment of literary works associated with sociological problems in the work and its relevance to real life. The existence of the assessment because of literary works is a reflection of the social life of a society.

The relevance of literary works as a reflection of a social life proves that a literary work always has partiality. Both pure partialities come from the author's understanding or partisanship of people. In this study, the researcher chose the object of research in the form of Charles Dickens's novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, which in the novel contains an opinion that comes from the author and there are indicators where the novel is in favor of a particular society. Thus it is said that the novel is a tendentious literary work, which means that the novel has a certain purpose behind the creation.

In this research, researchers do research about the problem of sociological



conditions and their relevance to real life based on history. The novel *A Tale of Two Cities* is considered as object of the study, because it tells the upheaval in two cities, Paris and London. It is said that life in Paris is very cruel because nobles treat the common people very badly. Begin to discriminate in various forms, to perform acts of physical violence. People who are not comfortable with the situation run to London to seek peace of life. But not until there alone, the people finally do rebellion to destroy the cruel leadership.

The relationship of sociological problems with the novel is that there are many conditions in which there is a humanitarian crisis in the social life in the plot of the story, moreover the novel is the background of the upheaval in two cities that are very contrast in the life-loving aspect. The story in the novel also has some similarities to the history of the French revolution.

Based on the explanation, researchers interested in examine to the relevance of sociological conditions in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* associated with the history of the French revolution. Researcher is very curious about the relevance of the story in the novel to the history of the French revolution because researcher want to identify the types of social conflicts that exist within it. In addition, the researcher is also interested in classifying the types of social conflicts in it with some characteristics of social conflicts of many kinds. For that in this research, researchers used the theory of the history of the French revolution that will be strengthened by the theory of discrimination to identify the social problems that exist in the novel.

**a. Statement of The Problem**

What is the relevance of sociological conditions in novel to sociological conditions based on the history of the French Revolution?

**b. Purpose of The Research**

To identify the relevance of sociological conditions in novels to sociological conditions based on the history of the French revolution.

**Method**

**a. Research Design**

This research is a research library (library research), where the object of research in the form of a novel titled *A*

*Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. The research of this library focuses on the object of research which is then examined with the approach of sociology of literature. In the process of assessment, this study uses literature studies in the form of previous studies associated with the field of research.

**b. Method of Data Collections**

The data is collected by close reading to understand story in novel.

Close reading is one of the first reading skills terms introduced by educational practitioners, Roger Far and Nancy Roser in a book titled *Teaching a Child to Read*. Close reading also be applied in the world of education, especially teaching and learning activities. The step of this research, the authors collect data in accordance with the subject to be studied. Data obtained from the object to be studied. After the authors obtain the data to be studied, the next thing to do is analyze the data based on the theories that have been described above. Another method is taking note on the object of the research.

The object of this research is novel. Note taking is a method that is often used in data collection. Usually after reading the material to be studied then do the note taking of important points. In this step, the researcher do the process of note taking after reading the object. Researcher classify the keyword data of related with the problems, record it and then from the results of the record will be developed into an analysis.

**c. Population and Samples**

The population of the research is all of the content of the story in *A Tale of Two Cities*. The samples of this research are the entire contents of the novel indicated its relevance to the history of French Revolution.

**d. Method of Data Analysis**

In this research, the researcher uses descriptive method with intrinsic approach and extrinsic approach. In the intrinsic approach, According of Redyanto Noor, the researcher focuses on plot of story. Extrinsic approach, the researcher uses



sociological approach, especially a theory about discrimination by Theodorson & Theodorson to analyze the data of the research

as a treatment different from an individual or group based on something, such as race, ethnicity, religion, social status and social class.

## 1. Results

The story in novel *A Tale of Two Cities* has relevance to the history of French Revolution. The relevance was found after the researcher analyzed the plot, social conditions, factors, the type of social conflict and the impact of social conflict in novel *A Tale of Two Cities* and compared it with the history of the French Revolution. The researchers found there are many similar social conditions between Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* and the history of the French revolution. The similarities of social conditions occurred in the pre-revolutionary, revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods.

## 2. Discussion

### A. History of French Revolution

The French Revolution was a major event affecting the development of the present French state. In the mid-1700s to early 1800s the French revolution was able to destroy the system of absolute monarchy rule. Where in those days there was a very severe financial crisis and the existence of gaps and even discrimination against the poor. At that time, the nobility ruled arbitrarily, so that the poor were very miserable. The welfare of the nobles is highly favored, while the economic conditions of the little people are too neglected. Even the people are burdened with a very stifling tax on the neck. In the midst of this upheaval the lower classes began to feel disgusted and in the end they decided to fight the nobles who were then leading. Massacres took place, and that's where the French revolution erupted.

### B. Social Conflict and Discrimination Theory as Sociological Approach

Social conflict is a social process between two or more parties in which there is a process of getting rid of each other by dropping it. Social conflicts occur because of differences in mindset to differences in physical form. The types of social conflicts vary widely, which can be either gaps or the most popular in the form of discrimination.

According to Theodorson & Theodorson (1979: 115-116) mentions that discrimination

### C. The Relevance of Social Conditions between Stories in *A Tale of Two Cities* novel and the History of the French Revolution

Social conditions are the state of a society within a certain time. In the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* has certain social conditions according to the depiction of the story, while during the French Revolution also has certain social conditions.

#### a. Pre- Revolutionary Social Conditions

##### a) Based on Novel *A Tale of Two Cities*

Based on the story in novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, social conditions before the revolution were so unstable. In 1757, Doctor Manette was ordered to take care of the girl rape victim by the nobility. But when he was about to reveal everything, he was thrown into the prison of the Bastille. After 18 years of imprisonment, he brought by her daughter back to London. In 1780, a nobleman named Marquis St. Evermonde ran a child on his horse-drawn carriage to death. Marquis considers the incident to be just a trivial incident, he instead throws coins to the child's parents instead. It is contained in the following excerpt of the novel:

- “But for the latter inconvenience, the carriage probably would not have stopped, carriages were often known to drive on, and leave their wounded behind...” (*Book 2, Chapter VII, page 92*)
- “He threw out a gold coin for the valet to pick up, and all the heads craned forward that all the eyes might look down at it as it

##### b) Based on the History of French Revolution

Social conditions before the revolution, France was under the rule of absolute monarchy. During the old regime France experienced difficult times and very crisis that resulted in



the scarcity of wheat and the price of staple food in the form of bread becomes very expensive. In the political aspect before the revolution, the king was the bureaucratic leader of the court of Versailles and the Bastille prison was the epitome of this regime. The existence of this monarchy system has an impact on economic and social life, where the country has decreased the price of wheat long enough.

From the above two explanations both mention that the social conditions at that time the poor people are under the pressure of leadership with the monarchy system.

#### b. Social Conditions During the Revolution

##### a) Based on Novel *A Tale of Two Cities*

Based on the story in novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, the social conditions of the revolution are so menacing. On July 14, 1789 all the poor people cornered in the city of Saint-Antoine flock to the Bastille prison with guns in each hand. Bastille Prison was burned by the rampage of the poor people who had grown furious with the arbitrary behavior of the aristocrats. This is evident in the quotation below:

*"Let us collect them together, in the middle of the cell. Light them, you!" (Book 2, Chapter XXI, page 187)*

##### b) Based on the History of French Revolution

At the time of the French Revolution is very chaotic condition. Poor people like losing control, feelings of fury and panic enveloped all parts of the country especially in Paris. On July 14 the people began to attack and loot weapons arsenal the incident led to the burning of the Bastille prison and the massacre. In 1792 the king Louis XVI and his wife were tragically killed in the hands of the poor people. They were slaughtered with a massacre device called Guillotine by herding their head.

Based on the explanation, there are similarities of social conditions and

events in accordance with historical facts namely the burning of the Bastille prison. In addition to the execution of one of the ministers of Breteuil, Fouillon de Dove. Fouillon was brought to the center of the city covered with straw-straw on his neck and forced to eat grass because he had once ordered the people to eat grass, he was finally executed by hanging. The history has in common with events in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* which can be proven by the quotation below:

- *"...Foulon alive! Foulon who told the starving people they might eat grass!..." (Book 2, Chapter XXII, page 191)*
- *"..That was well done to tie a bunch of grass upon his back..." (Book 2, Chapter XXII, page 191)*
- *"...then, the rope was merciful, and had him, and his head soon upon the peak, with grass enough in the mouth for all Saint-Antoine to dance at the sight of." (Book 2, Chapter XXII, page 192)*

#### c. Post- Revolutionary Social Conditions

##### a) Based on Novel *A Tale of Two Cities*

Based on the story in novel *A Tale of Two Cities* illustrated that post-revolution of social life of poor people has improved. After the rebellion took place, the little people were no longer treated arbitrarily by the nobility. This is evident in the following quotation:

*"Haggard Saint-Antoine had only one exultant week, in which to soften his modicum of hard and bitter bread to such an extent as he could, with the relish of fraternal embraces and congratulation..." (Book 2, Chapter XXII, page 189)*

##### b) Based on the History of French Revolution

The French Revolution had an impact on the science revolution. After the revolution came new understandings in the community, such as liberalism, democracy and



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nationalism. From the post-revolutionary political aspect, France officially became a republic and feudal system and the withdrawal of tax was abolished. Tax payments are transferred to countries aimed at developing countries.

From the equation of social conditions it can be concluded that there is relevance of social conditions between the stories in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities* with the historical facts of the French revolution.

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