Name: _____
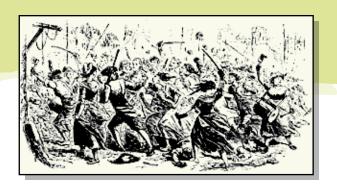
A Tale of Two Cities: The Beginning

Charles Dickens wrote *A Tale of Two Cities* which was published in 1859. The novel takes place in Paris and London before and during the French Revolution. Through the actions of the characters, Dickens compares the social and political situations of the two cities. Below are the opening paragraphs of the book.

A Tale of Two Cities

by Charles Dickens

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

There was a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever.
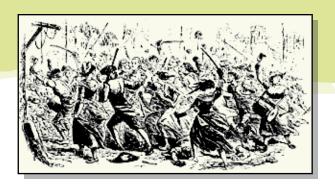
Answer the following questions.

1. Dickens starts the novel with a series of seeming contradictions, e.g. "it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness." How do you think the time can be both?

2. In the passage the author states "the period was so far like the present period." He sees the time of the opening of the book (1775) is the same as his own time (1859). Using the best/worst descriptions in the first paragraph, state a similarity you see between 1775 and today.

3. Dickens refers to the "lords of the State preserves" who believe that "things in general were settled for ever." Who do you think these lords are, and what things are settled?

Name: _____ **Key** _____

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Answer the following questions.   **Answers: Student's choice.**

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K12 Reader