Violence and Justice Across Space and Time

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Throughout history, the use of violence has always been a contentious issue. Whatever the problem, there have always been hawks and doves. What is most interesting is the shades of morality in between. The biggest question has always been "when is violence justified?" Violence in this case is defined as physically harmful action taken against both living creatures and inanimate objects like buildings. Both *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Things Fall Apart* have nuanced takes on violence, and authors rarely state their positions on violence explicitly. The only way to elucidate what forms of violence are justified in the two novels is to evaluate the results of the violence and the tone the authors take respecting the perpetrators and victims. Both novels examine violence on three separate levels: at the level of the civilization or culture, at the level of groups, and at the level of the individual.

The cultural norms surrounding violence in *A Tale of Two Cities* are contained within one civilization, but the perpetrators and the victims shift dramatically as the story progresses, as do the norms themselves. The first half of the novel focuses on the violence dealt by the nobility in France against the peasants and common folk, illustrated by Monsieur the Marquis's callousness towards a man whose child he had killed (Dickens 111). The nearby witnesses do nothing, fearing the power of the nobles. In that instance, the violence done by the Marquis was excusable to the people of the time under the Draconian privileges and norms of the ancient order, acknowledged by the Marquis as "little instruments of correction, these gentle aids to the power.