An Analysis of *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Frankenstein*

I. Introduction
   A. Attention getter
   B. Thesis statement—both Dickens and Shelley suggest that good and evil are ambiguous

II. Ambiguity of good and evil in *A Tale of Two Cities*
   A. Juxtaposes conflicting characteristics in a single character
   B. Madame Defarge
      1. Extremely violent
      2. Suffered extraordinary hardships
   C. Sydney Carton
      1. Drunken deadbeat
      2. Sacrifices himself for Lucie and her family

III. Ambiguity of good and evil in *Frankenstein*
   A. Never defines who is the villain and who is the hero
   B. The monster
      1. Murdered Frankenstein’s brother and wife
      2. Rejected and hated by society
      3. Sacrifices himself so he won’t hurt anyone else
   C. Frankenstein
      1. Never attacks anyone
      2. Abandons the monster
      3. Doesn’t consider what might happen to his family when he makes some of his choices

IV. Conclusion
   A. Restatement of thesis
   B. Conclusion statement
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On the surface, Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* and Mary Shelley’s *magnum opus*, *Frankenstein*, appear to be two wildly different novels. One retells the violent tale of the French Revolution, and the other is the story of a scientist who discovers how to reanimate dead tissue. Based on the basic plots, one would assume that the authors of these two novels would have absolutely nothing in common, but in reality, they are quite similar. In analyzing *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Frankenstein*, one can see that Dickens and Shelley both employ one very important theme— the ambiguity of good and evil.

Neither *A Tale of Two Cities* nor *Frankenstein* portray a stereotypical, caricature version of good and evil. Instead, both Dickens and Shelley purport the idea that good and evil are, at best, hazy. Dickens achieves this by juxtaposing positive and negative character traits in a single character. In doing so, he creates sympathetic villains and questionable heroes. For example, in *A Tale of Two Cities*, the role of the chief malefactor is played by the *wanton*, anti-aristocratic Madame Defarge. Described by Dickens as “a tigress [. . .] absolutely without pity” (Dickens 359), Madame Defarge is the cruelest character in the novel, gleefully participating in the massacres of hundreds of guilty and innocent French citizens (Dickens 217). Yet, despite all of that, it is likely that the reader will finish *A Tale of Two Cities* with some amount of sympathy for this