

***Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo (Translated by Charles E. Wilbour; Abridged by James Robinson) (Published by Fawcett Columbine)**

Approved for use in Honors Communication Arts II

Summary

Les Miserables is the story of the Bishop of Digne, Jean Valjean, Fantine, Cosette, Javert and Marius Pontmercy, who meet, part, then meet again during the most agitated decades of nineteenth-century France. It also tells the effects of the 1832 revolution and describes the unpleasant side of Paris. Jean Valjean struggles to escape his past and reaffirm his humanity. The novel is, in essence, a plea for humane treatment of the poor and for equality among all citizens.

Connection to the Curriculum

This classic text promotes in-depth exploration of the elements of character and theme. The conflicts among characters are numerous, and the exploration of character motivation and development is essential. The most important theme is that of transformation in the individual and in society. Jean Valjean, the chief protagonist, is transformed from an ex-convict to a man capable of heroic love and self-sacrifice. The Bishop of Digne offers Valjean unconditional love and trust. Because of the Bishop's actions, Valjean finds inspiration for an entirely new life. Valjean learns to put another person first when he raises Cosette as his own daughter, and he endures moral trials, such as risking his life to rescue Marius, who loves Cosette and whom Valjean hates.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Writing: 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.3.2- The student determines meanings of words or phrases using context clues.

1.3.6- The student discriminates between connotative and denotative meanings and interprets the connotative power of words.

1.4.10- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading the text.

1.4.11- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

1.4.17- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style and use of literary devices work together to achieve his or her purpose.

Literature:

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and its influence on characters and events in the story.

2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates plot elements.

2.1.4- The student analyzes the author's point of view.

Writing:

3.1- The student writes effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

The story of Jean Valjean includes references to his hardships as a result of living in poverty (including incarceration for stealing bread) and his journey to make a better life for himself (including hiding his true identity). The abridged version read by Blue Valley students contains only limited references to the violence of war. There are references to a single mother struggling to provide for her child in addition to some limited child abuse. The novel ends with the implied suicide of the antagonist, Javert. These instances are all directly related to the development of the characters and plot.

AP Connections

For Honors CAII students, *Les Miserables* provides a link to the canon of classics considered essential for college-bound readers. Although reading only the abridged version does limit the use of this novel for AP writing, allusions to Jean Valjean expose readers to this type of narrative writing and the style of Victor Hugo.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon:
To be completed during future curriculum development activities