



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS



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Written by Ashlin Bray

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Research

Objective: Understanding the historical context of a novel to increase comprehension

Activity

Read the information provided below on the political situation in France and discuss the questions that follow.

Alexandre Dumas, author of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, did not consider this work one of his historical novels, but it is usually understood as being one today. Any reader of the work, however, must have a basic understanding of French history during the period of the story because political events force some of the action in the novel.

As summarized in the Introduction (Pgs. XI–XII), the novel opens on February 24, 1815. This was an uncertain time in French history and politics, and that uncertainty is reflected in the novel—fears of plots and conspiracies were everywhere, and old loyalties could prove advantageous or fatal.

The uncertain political situation in the novel reflects the end of the French monarchy, its replacement by Napoleon, a strong-willed general, his overthrow and the restoration of the monarchy, Napoleon's return for the brief period known as the Hundred Days, and the restoration, once again, of the monarchy.

Before the novel began, France was ruled by Louis XVI, who was a member of the noble Bourbon family that had ruled since 1589. Over-taxed and virtually bankrupt, France struggled to maintain its glittering reputation, but the nobles refused to give up privilege. Hunger and discontent spread among the people, and military disasters further weakened the government. The French Revolution began in 1789, with the king becoming a figurehead and then a fugitive. He (and his queen, Marie Antoinette) were arrested in 1792 and executed in 1793. Their son, called the Dauphin or the heir to the throne, was given the title of king by his uncle, but remained in prison until his death in 1795. After the death of Louis XVI, France was ruled as a republic, but the government was unstable and poorly financed; many political executions took place, and great uncertainty cloaked the nation.

In 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte, who had led French armies to success in Italy (where he converted a ragtag assemblage into a proud and conquering army) and Egypt, returned to France and overturned the weak central government. From then until the restoration of the Bourbon king, Louis XVIII (who appears in *The Count of Monte Cristo*), Napoleon ruled France with the support of his followers, the Bonapartists. Napoleon moved quickly to centralize power, stabilize the economy, published a new code of laws, and make taxation and administration major concerns of the central government. Becoming increasingly autocratic, Napoleon moved from being consul to consul-for-life to emperor.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I–XX**Artistic****Objective:** Visualization—developing the ability to translate text into drawings**Activity**

Map the Abbé's escape plan, which is given below.

“The abbé showed Dantès a drawing he had made. It was a plan of his own cell, that of Dantès', and the passage joining them. In the middle of this passage they would bore a tunnel, like those used in mines. This tunnel would lead the prisoners under the gallery where the sentry was on duty; arrived there, a large excavation would be made by loosening one of the flagstones with which the floor of the gallery was paved; at a given moment the stone would give way under the soldier's weight and he would disappear into the excavation below. Dantès would throw himself upon him before he had recovered from the shock of the fall and while he was still unable to defend himself. He would gag and blindfold him, and then the two prisoners would jump through one of the windows, climb down the outside wall by means of the rope-ladder the abbé had made and they would be saved!” (Pg. 77)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I–XX**Artistic**

Objective: Visualization—developing the ability to identify motifs of interest, marketing, artistic interpretation

Activity

Propose a new front cover with text and illustrations and a back cover with text and “blurbs” from other writers praising the book. Choose from the following ideas:

- Market the book as a romance
- Market the book as an adventure/action story
- Market the book as a classic every student should read

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters I–XX**Character****Objective:** Understanding character; writing a character study**Activity**

In the course of this sprawling novel, you will meet Edmond Dantès in various stages of his life and in different characters. Drawing on what you know from Chapters I–XX, write a character sketch (one half to one page) of Edmond as a young man. Include the following factors in your writing:

- Honesty/dishonesty
- Optimism/pessimism
- Well liked/disliked
- Faithful/unfaithful in love
- Capable and resilient/needy and dependent

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XXI–XLIV**Language****Objective:** Increasing proficiency in writing poetry**Activity**

Write a poem, song or rap message from one young person to the other, choosing from one of the couples listed below:

- Valentine and Maximilian (They are sweethearts who meet secretly, eventually obtaining the help of her grandfather.)
- Valentine and the Baron d'Epinau (They are engaged at the insistence of Valentine's father, but they do not love each other.)
- Albert de Morcerf and Eugène Danglars (They are engaged, although the arrangement has been made by their fathers rather than because of any deep attraction.)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XXI–XLIV**Character**

Objective: Analyzing character as a factor in the dynamics of the story

Activity

Analyze any two of the characters listed below. Present your findings in a chart, an essay, or an oral presentation. The analysis should be based primarily on the character as he or she is seen in this section of the novel.

- The Count of Monte Cristo
- Baron Danglars
- Albert de Morcerf
- Mercédès de Morcerf
- Fernand de Morcerf
- Baron d'Épinay
- Valentine de Villefort
- Gérard de Villefort

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XXI–XLIV**Writing**

Objective: Understanding the constraints in a situation, identifying feasible solutions

Activity

Valentine is in love with Maximilian Morrel, but she is engaged to Baron d'Epinay. The engagement was set up by Valentine's father. Although arranged marriages were common at the time, Valentine's grandfather opposes the match and has agreed to help Valentine and Maximilian. The sweethearts have trouble meeting because young women were closely supervised.

Create a letter from Valentine to a newspaper columnist asking for advice. Then, as the columnist, respond to Valentine with advice on handling her situation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapters XLV–LXXI**Language****Objective:** Reinforce the identification and understanding of literary devices**Activity**

Simile, Metaphor, Forshadowing are commonly used literary terms. Writers employ these devices to add color to their work and clarify or obscure meaning. Using the page numbers listed on the chart, find examples of these literary devices. Write the passage on the chart, underlining the literary device. Then, identify the device by name in the next block.