

The Count of Monte Cristo

The Count of Monte Cristo by Penguin Classics ISBN 978-0-14-044926-6

It is important to have the same copy for class discussions!

The following is a very brief overview of the author and historical period. On the back of this sheet, you will find your instructions for what to annotate while reading.

1. Alexandre Dumas

1802-1870

Father died when he was young

Not formally educated, but read voraciously

Wrote historical novels, children's stories, travel books

Admired Napoleon

Dumas wrote novel in 1844 in France. (Also wrote *The Three Musketeers*)

The novel is set during the time period of 1815-1844

Plot inspired by true-life story of Francois Picaud (p.xiv-xv)

2. Key historical events for setting of novel:

July 14, 1789-Bastille Day.

Napoleon rises to prominence during French Revolution.

1793 King Louis XVI is guillotined

Napoleonic Era 1799-1814

Napoleon is beloved by people. Abolishes serfdom, feudalism, and guarantees basic human rights. Dominates Europe by 1808.

1804-Napoleon is voted emperor of all French lands.

1814- Napoleon is crushed by New European Alliance.

Sent to Isle of Elba.

Louis XVIII named King.

March 1, 1815 – Napoleon escapes the Isle of Elba; King flees to Brussels.

March 20, 1815 – Napoleon's Hundred Days of Reign. Prussia, Britain, and Netherlands combine to fight him.

June 18, 1815 – Napoleon is defeated as the Battle of Waterloo; Napoleon sent to St. Helena.

1821 – Napoleon dies.

3. Social context:

Prior to Napoleon, the social system was known as the Old Regime and it had three unequal classes called Estates. **First estate**=powerful clergy 1% of pop.; **Second estate**=nobility 2% of pop. (Neither First nor Second paid taxes); **Third Estate**=subclasses of professionals and merchants (Bourgeois), laborers, and peasants (97% of pop. – they did pay taxes).

After revolution – three main political parties: Girondists who were traditional and conservative, Jacobins who were liberal and radical, and a third party with no definite view (although most eventually sided with Jacobins).

4. Novel begins in 1815. Action centers around Edmund Dantes, the protagonist.

Unjustly accused early in the novel, he spends his life seeking revenge/justice.

Novel begins with an errand he has been given by his captain – a letter to deliver to Napoleon on the Isle of Elba.

5. While you read:

A. Keep track of characters. 1) Circle new character names and underline important information about their identity. 2) Keep track of Dantes/the Count by underlining important aspects of his physical appearance, words, actions, and internal struggles.

B. Keep track of any references to justice, revenge, or God/(Providence) by underlining and writing a letter in the margin: J, R, G

6. Assignment:

- 10 page references for justice/revenge/God. These themes overlap throughout the book. You will type or neatly handwrite the page number for each reference along with a brief description of the reference. Please take one reference and write an extended paragraph, explaining the importance of the reference to the novel.
- 10 page references for the character of the Count. Look for important actions and statements he makes. You will type or neatly handwrite the page number for each reference along with a brief description of the reference. Please take one reference and write an extended paragraph, explaining the importance of the reference to the novel.

On the first day of school, you must have 20 references with brief explanations along with two extended paragraphs.