

ENRICHED
CLASSICS

**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities
for the Enriched Classic edition of
Les Miserables by Victor Hugo
1-4165-0026-X • \$6.95 / \$8.99 Can.**

Activities created by Katie Gideon

Each of the three activities includes:

- NCTE standards covered
- An estimate of the time needed
- A complete list of materials needed
- Step-by-step instructions
- Questions to help you evaluate the results

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Lesson Plan #1

“France’s Epic Romance”
(An Introductory Lesson)

In *Les Misérables*, the struggles faced by Jean Valjean mirror the difficulties faced by a nation at large. Throughout the course of his epic novel, Victor Hugo introduces readers to unforgettable characters and powerfully universal themes.

In this lesson, students will read the novel’s introduction to better understand its historical context. Through guided reading and research, students will describe and discuss prominent issues of nineteenth-century France. Finally, they will artistically explore the novel’s recurring themes.

This activity begins with one homework assignment, followed by one fifty-minute class period.

NCTE Standards Covered:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

What To Do:

1. Give each student a copy of Handout #1. Instruct the students to do the following for homework:
 - a. Read the publisher’s introduction (pages ix-xv), as well as the chronology of the author’s life, and the timeline of historical context.

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- b. Define each of the words listed on Handout #1 (each word appears somewhere in the selected reading) and write a sentence using each word. Then, use personal experience as well as the reading to answer the handout's remaining questions.
 - c. Choose one of the events from the historical context timeline and conduct some brief research to learn more about the event in question. Write one paragraph on the back of Handout #1 summarizing your findings. You should be able to tell your classmates why this event is historically important and how it may have influenced Hugo's writing.
2. The next day in class, discuss the students' research. How is nineteenth-century France similar to today's society? How is it different? How will this knowledge affect their reading of the novel?
3. Divide students into pairs. Explain that each pair will examine a major recurring theme from *Les Misérables*. Then, hand each pair a strip of paper bearing one of the following thematic phrases: Love Conquers All, Social Injustice, Legal Duties versus Moral Imperatives.
4. Instruct the pairs to represent their theme by making a collage that depicts their theme—as evident in nineteenth-century French society, our society, or both.
5. Post the finished collages. Allow enough time for students to walk around, viewing and processing one another's work. For homework, have them respond to the three themes in a journal write (e.g., "What do you feel is most important—protecting your loved ones, doing what's right, or following the law? Explain.")

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Les Misérables* (ISBN: 141650026X) for each student

Copies of Handout #1

Three themes (Love Conquers All, Social Injustice, Legal Duties versus Moral Imperatives.) copied onto small strips of paper (one theme for each pair of students)

Collage materials (magazines, colored paper, glue, scissors, etc.)

How Did It Go?

Reading the introduction is a great way to provide context for students with insufficient background knowledge. Furthermore, the visually based collage activity renders the themes accessible for students developing English language proficiency.

Could students visually depict the themes they'll encounter during their reading of *Les Misérables*? Do they have a basis for understanding the key themes? Did their brief research into topics mentioned on the timeline build sufficient background knowledge to aid in textual understanding?

Lesson Plan #2

“It is an imperative necessity”
(A Lesson in Textual Features)

Successful readers use text features to enhance their understanding of a written piece. Titles, headings, graphic features, and supplementary materials serve to highlight meaning—and students must learn to use them accordingly. In this lesson, students will complete a scavenger hunt to familiarize themselves with the process of using endnotes.

This activity takes one fifty-minute class period.

NCTE Standards Covered:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What To Do:

1. Start class with an informal brainstorming session. Ask students what they do when they can't understand key phrases in a text. What resources do they use? Do they consult a dictionary? A classmate? A teacher? Explain to them that endnotes are another resource and that, today, they will practice using them. This will be an invaluable tool, since many phrases encountered in a nineteenth-century French novel may be unfamiliar to students.

2. Give the students an example of how endnotes work. Have them flip to the cover page for Book I: *Fantine*. Now, turn their attention to the third paragraph of this chapter, where it describes Madame Magloire, who “took the double title of *femme de chambre*” (pg. 3). How can we discover what this phrase means? Flip to the back section titled “Notes,” which begins on page 597. Direct students’ attention to the definition for *femme de chambre*. What does a chambermaid actually do? Explain the definition in words the students understand, and tell them that they’ll also have to put endnotes in their own words.

3. Now, explain to students that they’ll be competing in a scavenger hunt to see who can use the endnotes most efficiently. You’ll be passing out a handout containing citations from the text. Students must locate the citations in the text, and then use the endnotes to define the key word or phrase in each citation. As a final step, they’ll translate the endnote definition into their own words. The first group to receive a perfect score wins the prize.

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4. Divide students into groups. Give each group a handout. As students complete the activity, assist as necessary.

5. After awarding the prize, gather students together for another informal conversation. What was it like using the endnotes? Was it difficult? Easy? How do they anticipate using this resource as they read the novel?

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Les Misérables* (ISBN: 141650026X) for each student

Copies of Handout #2

A prize for your scavenger hunt winners

How did it go?

A side benefit of this lesson is that students see examples of parenthetical notation. If you plan to assign an essay at the end of your unit, you might want to draw their attention to the citations, and evaluate their effectiveness in following this model.

For purposes of today, however, ask yourself: were the students able to find the citations in the text? Were they able to use the endnotes to define each word or phrase? Do they understand how this resource works? Do they have a better understanding of the words and phrases on the handout? Could they work together to accomplish the task quickly and efficiently?

Lesson Plan #3

“A pitiless detective, a fierce honesty”
(A Lesson in Comparing and Contrasting)

The ability to analyze two texts—or characters—in terms of similar and dissimilar characteristics allows students to describe complex relationships in concrete terms. In this lesson, students will compare the original Javert/Valjean conflict to its depiction in the Broadway musical. Listening to the music engages students with the story in a new way, while conversing about their insights encourages a community of learning.

This activity takes one or two fifty-minute class periods.

NCTE Standards Covered:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

What To Do:

1. This lesson assumes that students have finished reading Book I: Fantine. Review key events with your students before commencing with the comparison activity. They should pay special attention to any descriptions of or interactions between Javert and Valjean.

2. Pass out a copy of Handout #3 to each student. Remind them of a fact they read in the introduction—that Victor Hugo’s novel is the basis for a famous Broadway musical. Today, they will have a chance to compare the two mediums. Direct their attention to “The Champmatheiu Affair” in the novel (pp. 85-122). Ask students about Valjean’s thought process before he reveals himself to the court room. What are his reasons for revealing his identity? What are the reasons he wants to conceal it, and the excuses he uses to convince himself that this would be a just action?

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3. On the novel column of their handouts, students should write down three quotes and/or summary statements that epitomize their analysis of Valjean’s moral quandary.
4. Once they’ve finished recording their thoughts about the novel, play them “Who Am I?” from the *Les Misérables* Broadway musical. What does this song convey about Valjean’s moral quandary? What does it highlight? What does it simplify or leave out? Students should record three quotes and/or summary statements on the musical column on their handouts.
5. Complete this process over again, this time analyzing the confrontation between Valjean and Javert. First, have students analyze the interaction as depicted in “Counterstroke” (pgs. 123-134). After they’ve completed the last three bullet points in their novel column, play them the song “Confrontation” off of the recording. How does the song depict this confrontation between Valjean and Javert? Students should fill out the final bullet points on the musical column of their handouts.
6. Encourage students to use their observations and draw explicit comparisons. They must write five compare/contrast statements.

Example comparison statement: In both the novel and the musical, Valjean’s concern about Fantine influences his decision-making process on whether or not to reveal himself.

Example contrasting statement: In the novel, Javert assumes that he, himself, has done wrong and begs “Monsieur Madeleine” to “procure his dismissal” after Javert denounces him to the Prefecture of Police in Paris. In the songs from the musical, however, Javert never seems contrite for any of his actions—his attitude is much more straight-forward and antagonistic.

7. After students have written their compare/contrast statements, encourage them to share with one another. Which format did they think was easier to understand—the book, or the musical? Which medium presented them with a more complex vision of the characters? Which did they like better, and why?

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Les Misérables* (ISBN: 141650026X) for each student

Copies of Handout #3 (one per student)

A recording of the Broadway musical *Les Misérables*

How did it go?

Did the graphic organizer on the handout help students draw connections between the two versions of this story? Were they able to write strong compare/contrast statements? Could students take a strong stance on which form of media they liked better—novel or musical—and then support their stance with evidence? Were they able to share their insights effectively during a class conversation?

Handout #1

Key Concepts: *Les Misérables*

For this section, define and write a sample sentence for each word in the space provided.

Turbulent _____

Advocate _____

Redemption _____

Use information from the introduction (pages ix-xv) as well as evidence from your own experience to answer the following questions.

1. Hugo was “a passionate political advocate and was deeply involved in the movements of his day.” What were some of the causes he championed?

2. What is Romanticism? How does melodrama relate to Romanticism?

3. “Hugo lived to see his masterpiece proclaimed ‘the work of the century.’” Why do you think *Les Misérables* was so popular during his lifetime? Are there any movies or books today that have had a similar impact? Why or why not?

Using Endnotes: *Les Misérables*

Directions: Underline the portion of the text that requires an endnote to understand. Then, look up the endnote in the back of the book (pages 597-607). Copy down the endnote definition in the middle column. In the last column, translate the definition to your own words.

Citation from Text	Endnote Explanation	In My Own Words
<p>“It was implacable duty, absorbed in the police as the Spartans were absorbed in Sparta, a pitiless detective, a fierce honesty, a marblehearted informer, Brutus united with Vidocq” (Hugo 55)</p>		
<p>“A <i>môme</i> like <i>mézig</i> is an <i>orgue</i>, and <i>orgues</i> like <i>vousailles</i> are <i>mômes</i>” (Hugo 378)</p>		
<p>“Two <i>voltigeurs</i>, who were trying to raise the shattered omnibus, were killed by two shots from a carbine fired from the dormer windows” (Hugo 504)</p>		
<p>“Then, the barricades built, the posts assigned, the muskets loaded, the videttes placed...” (Hugo 429)</p>		
<p>“Then he took a cabriolet, which carried him as far as the esplanade of the Observatory” (Hugo 178)</p>		
<p>“...Marius in black, she in white, preceded by the usher in colonel’s epaulettes, striking the pavement with his halberd...” (Hugo 549)</p>		
<p>“I have been nineteen years in the galleys” (Hugo 15)</p>		

Compare and Contrast: *Les Misérables*

From the novel:	From the musical:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• • • • • •	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• • • • • •

Your 5 compare/contrast statements about the different portrayals of the Javert/Valjean conflict (write on the back if necessary):