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**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities
for the Enriched Classic edition of
The Scarlet Pimpernel by Emmuska Orczy
0-7434-8774-5 • \$4.95 / \$6.95 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

“Revolutionary Webquest”
(A Lesson in Historical Context)

In order to successfully interpret *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, students must have a strong understanding of the historical context that forms the novel’s backdrop. In this lesson, students will research one relevant topic and then share findings with the class. In addition to preparing the students for reading the novel, this web-based research activity demands that they critically read their information sources.

This activity takes two fifty-minute class periods and also includes homework.

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).
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.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

What To Do:

1. Have each student read *The Scarlet Pimpernel* Historical Context (pgs. xxi-xxii) for homework. As they read, they should track unfamiliar words and concepts. The goal is to come to class with questions regarding the French Revolution.
2. The next day in class, have students share any questions raised by the timeline.
3. Pass out Handout #1. Review with your students what web sources will be acceptable and unacceptable for this assignment. (e.g., do they need to restrict their research to university

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websites only?) Explain that each student will be assigned a topic for investigation. Their findings will create the historical context necessary for building understanding of this novel.

4. Assign two or three students to one of the following potential topics. Students should work individually, but pairing up on topics ensures that the class receives quality information. Possible topics for research include:
 - a. The Estates (First, Second, Third)
 - b. Louis XVI
 - c. Marie Antoinette
 - d. Estates General
 - e. National Assembly
 - f. Tennis Court Oath
 - g. Storming the Bastille
 - h. Reign of Terror
 - i. Maximilien Robespierre
 - j. Committee of Public Safety
 - k. French Constitution
 - l. Emigres
 - m. Jacobin Club (or Republic)
 - n. Guillotine
 - o. British attitudes towards French Revolution
5. Assist your students as they complete their research on the Internet. Handout #1 will help guide their research, but this will probably take the rest of the period.
6. Start your next class with a brief meeting between students who completed research on the same topic. These students will decide the best way to present their findings to the whole class.
7. Have students take notes on each topic as the other groups present.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Scarlet Pimpernel* (0743487745) for each student

Copies of Handout #1

Access to the Internet

How Did It Go?

Based on the criteria you chose for them, were the students able to distinguish between reputable and non-reputable web sources? During presentations, could they successfully share information with one another? Finally, a question to revisit as you read the novel: did this historical research project build sufficient background knowledge to aid textual understanding?

Lesson Plan #2

The English and the French
(A Lesson in Compare/Contrast)

This close reading lesson encourages students to actively read *The Scarlet Pimpernel* for any evidence revealing the author's attitude towards national characteristics of the English and French.

The activity will initially take twenty minutes to explain. The analysis may then be completed independently throughout the course of reading, and could easily culminate with a class discussion (see below for potential questions).

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

What To Do:

1. Begin class by looking up the definition for "volatile." Have the students brainstorm what the definition might look like in action—how would a volatile person act? What might he say? What might she do?
2. Explain that students will be comparing the author's portrayal of the English to her depiction of the French. Also explain that this is an activity that they will continue independently throughout the unit.
3. Pass out Handout #2. In order to give students a working example, read the first three paragraphs of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (pgs. 3-4). Help the students translate this description of the French mob into an appropriate entry on their charts.
4. As students read the novel, remind them to complete their comparison chart.
5. Upon finishing the novel, allow students to discuss their findings. Were the English consistently portrayed as rational? In contrast, were the Frenchmen always depicted as volatile? How is this dichotomy complicated by the portrayal of Marguerite, the French heroine?

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What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Scarlet Pimpernel* (0743487745) for each student

Copies of Handout #2

How Did It Go?

Were students able to select appropriate passages? Could they synthesize what they learned into a coherent graphic organizer? Could they explain their findings during a class discussion?

**“A Sly Englishman in Disguise”
(A Lesson in Theme)**

As the Interpretive Notes suggest, “many literal and figurative masks are used as devices” in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (pg. 344). This lesson encourages students to read these images as clues to one of the major themes of the book. They will examine the many references to disguise and seek possible interpretations of this recurring device. Along the way, they should achieve a better understanding of the symbols, themes, and motifs in Orczy’s fast-paced novel.

This activity will require one or two fifty-minute class periods, depending on how teachers choose to organize the group sharing portions of the lesson.

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).
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.
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.

What To Do:

1. Tell the students that disguises appear throughout the text. Some of these disguises are literal, and some are figurative. Give the students about five minutes to journal about personal associations with the word “disguise.”
2. Perform a “Chalk Talk,” wherein students silently write their ideas on the chalkboard to share with the class. Use their shared material as a springboard for discussion: how are disguises represented in today’s popular culture? Encourage students to discuss relevant books, movies, and graphic novels/comic books.
3. Now, place students in small groups, hand each group a copy of Handout #3, and ask them to find at least five references to disguise in the novel. As mentioned in the Interpretive Notes section of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, these disguises may include:
 - Costumes worn by the Scarlet Pimpernel during rescues
 - Percy’s public persona as a brainless fop
 - Chauvelin’s hidden identity and secret work as a spy

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- The “masks of detachment” used by Lord and Lady Blakeney to hide marital hurts (p.344)

4. Clarify: though they are working in groups, all students should individually copy the quotations down. They should provide a context for each quotation before they analyze its significance.

5. Ask each group to share its findings and compare passages.

6. Then, ask each student to complete the following sentence: “In *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, the most compelling use of disguise is when...” This sentence is their thesis statement.

7. For homework, have students write a paragraph that supports the thesis statement they created in step 6. Paragraphs should utilize at least two of the quotations found in class, and provide context for the disguise in question.

8. The next day in class, give students a chance to briefly pair up and share paragraphs. After one student reads, her partner should offer feedback regarding the strengths of the piece. The student’s partner might also offer one or two suggestions for strengthening the argument.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Scarlet Pimpernel* (0743487745) for each student

Copies of Handout #3

How Did It Go?

Were students able to identify appropriate passages? Could the students provide a conclusion to the thesis stem sentence as supported by the text? Were the students able to construct an essay that examined the use of disguise in this novel? Did their paragraphs reflect their thought process? Did the partner review provide writers with valuable feedback, and learners with important information?



Handout #1

**Revolutionary Webquest
Annotation Form**

Your name: _____

Your Topic: _____

Title of Website: _____

Author/Publisher of Website: _____

Date accessed: _____

You know the source is reputable because... _____

Key information about your topic: _____

Predictions: how might this historical topic appear in the novel? _____

The English and the French: Comparison Chart

You will use this chart to track moments in the text that suggest that rational Englishmen are resourceful, while unthinking French citizens are volatile. When possible, look for direct comparisons of English and French institutions (e.g., Jellyband’s hotel versus the French “Chat Gris”). On the back of this paper, record any plot devices or characters that complicate our understanding of the novel’s English/French paradigm.

Rational, Resourceful Englishmen	Unthinking, Volatile French Citizens
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.

“A Sly Englishman in Disguise”

Quotation	Context Where does this passage exist in relation to the other text?	Theme How does this particular passage support the overall them of disguise?