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CLASSICS

**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities
for the Enriched Classic edition of
The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas
0-7434-8755-9 • \$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

“A Great Change in His Features”
(A Lesson in Tone Analysis)

Students hoping to study literature in college must be able to analyze an author's attitude and/or the tone of a passage. The following lesson gives them guided practice in honing this necessary skill.

The activity takes one fifty-minute class period, and is followed by one homework assignment. It assumes that students have already finished reading through Chapter XVII on their own.

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. Explain that students will be analyzing the description of Edmond contained in Chapter XVII. Have the students turn to page 129 in their books. They should follow along as you read the character description out loud. Invite students to share their general impressions of Edmond. Based on this passage, what do they think Edmond has lost? What has he gained?

2. Next, share the definition of "diction" with students:

Diction: word choice, used by an author to share meaning and mood with the reader

3. Have students reread the passage on their own, taking note of any unusual, interesting, incomprehensible, or highly connotative words. They should look up any unknown words in a dictionary.

4. As a class, discuss ways in which an understanding of these words increases your appreciation of the character description. What kinds of feelings do the words conjure for the reader? What connotations do the students associate with certain words that Dumas used? What kind of a man

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has Edmond Dantès become, and how do we know? How might Dumas's word choice be different if Edmond had resolved to pursue philanthropy instead of vengeance?

5. Now, share the definition of "tone" with students:

tone – indicates author's feelings about his or her subject. The attitude toward story *and* reader; the cumulative effect of the writer's words. An author's style (including diction!) conveys tone.

Tell students that, in analyzing the diction of the passage, they've already taken the first step in identifying tone. Now, students should look for images of sight and images of feeling (example "at times gloomy fires of misanthropy and hatred would sparkle in their [i.e. his eyes'] depths").

7. Students should think about the feeling created by the author's diction and use of imagery. They should list as many "feeling words" as they can to describe the tone of the passage. Students should use a thesaurus or dictionary to help them establish the subtle differences between these "feeling" (tone) words. They should choose the most explicit word possible to describe the tone of the passage.

8. Remind students that good authors rarely use only one tone. Invite them to compare the brief description of young Edmond Dantès to the much longer description of Edmond Dantès after fourteen years' imprisonment. Students should find the shift in tone by looking for:

- paragraph divisions
- changes in sentence lengths
- sharp contrasts in diction
- key words (including but, yet, however, although)
- dramatic punctuation

9. Given their analysis, ask students to interpret what Dumas is saying about the changes in Edmond. How do you think Dumas/the narrator feels about the transformation (and vengeful plans) of Edward? Have students complete the following two sentences:

"The _____ (ADJECTIVE) _____ diction in the character description suggests that Edmond has changed from a/an _____ (ADJECTIVE) _____ young man to a/an _____. As the narrator describes Edmond's transformation, the tone shifts from _____ (ADJECTIVE) _____ to _____ (ADJECTIVE) _____."

10. For homework, have students write a paragraph analyzing the tone of the passage. The sentence they've just written becomes their topic sentence. Students should support their topic sentence with specific examples and short quotations from the text, explaining clearly how the author uses language to create the tone(s) under discussion.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (0743487559) for each student

How Did It Go?

Were students able to identify connotative words during the diction exercise? Were they able to identify imagery in the passage? Is their vocabulary sufficient to describe the tone(s)? Were they able to use their in-class analysis to write coherent topic sentences? Did their paragraphs intelligently explore specific examples and quotations? Most importantly, did they come away from the activity with a better understanding of the character of Edmond Dantès?

Lesson Plan #2

“Assuming a dignified air”
(A Lesson in Comparing and Contrasting)

In this lesson, students will examine two female characters important to the development of the revenge plot. Through textual analysis, students will compare and contrast the behaviors and characteristics of Mercédès and Madame Danglars.

This lesson assumes that students have already read through Chapter XXII on their own. It takes twenty or thirty minutes to introduce, and then students continue the activity on their own. The lesson concludes with an at-home essay, which will involve several nights of 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.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

What To Do:

1. Have students respond in journals to a prompt regarding femininity or gentility in their own community. Possible prompts include: Who are some female role models in our society, and why do we look up to them? In your culture, what behaviors distinguish a polite, thoughtful person from a crude, selfish person? Ask a few students to share their responses with the class.
2. Explain that students will be comparing the portrayal of two women in *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Pass out Handout #1 and review what students have learned about Mercédès thus far. Also give students an example of how to capture long or disconnected passages on their Venn diagram. In Chapter XXII, Caderousse mentions Mercédès several times. Students could summarize thus:

Mercédès tries to comfort the elder Mr. Dantès after Edmond is arrested. She wants to move him to her cottage, but he refuses. She stays with him in his dying hours (Dumas 154-156).

Students should also note that the only thing we know about Madame Danglars thus far: she is "the daughter of the chamberlain who is in great favour at Court" (Dumas 159).

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3. As students continue to read the book, they should fill out the Venn diagram.
4. After finishing the book, lead students in a brief discussion. In what ways are Madame Danglars and Mercédès similar? Do their behaviors contrast? What roles do they play in the revenge on their husbands? What do the similarities and differences between these two characters seem to suggest about femininity? About gentility?
5. For homework, students will write an essay in response to the question that guided their note-taking on Handout #1. Also pass out Handout #2 (the rubric), and explain your entire criterion, so that students can successfully meet your expectations.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (0743487559) for each student

Copies of Handout #2

Copies of Handout #3

How Did It Go?

Did students learn something about femininity in the novel? Did the students learn something about inborn gentility in the novel? Were students able to find similarities and differences between Madame Danglars and Mercédès? Could they perform a focused reading of the text? Could they synthesize what they learned into a coherent graphic organizer? Could they explain their reasoning in a brief essay?

"The path that was opened up to me"
(A Lesson in Literary Analysis)

Rich in dramatic events and characters, *The Count of Monte Cristo* offers an excellent opportunity to develop students' literary analysis skills. The following assessment activity is designed to develop students' academic and social ability to conduct a literary discussion. In this lesson, students will use close reading and critical thinking skills to prepare for a discussion of the novel's vengeance theme.

This activity assumes that students have finished reading the book. It takes two fifty-minute class periods to complete (plus one or two nights spent on a homework assignment).

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.
- 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 by explaining the purpose of seminar to the students.
 - Explain that the conversation is theirs. The seminar prep and the opening question are starting points only--students can follow the conversation wherever it leads, so long as the new ideas and questions are text-based.
 - During the seminar, students will converse with one another. You will actually sit outside the circle so that you can assess them more accurately. You will only interject as necessary. Otherwise, they should ignore your presence.
 - Encourage students to view the preparatory materials as a chance to think before they talk. On the day of seminar, they should always try to connect their ideas to the

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comments of others. They should listen and respond--they're trying to build knowledge as a group.

2. Explain that, in order to focus the conversation, you will only focus on the chapters involving the de Villefort poisonings. Review any background information necessary for a good understanding of the section, so that you won't have to interrupt on the day of the seminar to clarify or provide additional information.
3. Give students Handout #3. The seminar prep is homework. They will not be admitted to the seminar unless they have completed the seminar prep.
4. On the day of the seminar, collect the students' answers to the questions on Handout #3. Give the students a brief silent activity while you check the handouts against your attendance list. Pass back the seminar prep to the students who completed it. These students should form an inner circle--bringing their seminar prep and *The Count of Monte Cristo* with them.
5. If any students failed to complete the seminar prep, they are not allowed to participate directly in the discussion. Instead, they should form an outer circle to critique, trouble-shoot, take notes, or track a peer's participation.
6. Open the seminar with the first question: Is the revenge that Edmond Dantès takes against de Villefort justified? In other words, does the ultimate punishment match the original crime?
7. Students should refer to both their seminar prep and the book during the seminar. Your job is to assess the seminar as it unfolds, and to redirect the conversation as necessary. This may include:
 - Quashing side conversations
 - Encouraging students to find support for their analysis in the actual texts
 - Inviting students to participate
 - Quelling negative debate or debasement of others
 - Encouraging students to question their original assumptions
 - Identify and correct misreading and misperceptions
 - Move the conversation along using the related questions from the seminar prep sheet
8. Plan for two days of discussion, but end the seminar when it feels done. Make notes on the Assessment Template as the seminar progresses. Afterwards, go around the circle and ask each student to critique the seminar. What worked? What didn't? What could be improved for next time? What were some of the best ideas that the students heard during seminar? Did their understanding of the text improve?

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (0743487559) for each student

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Copies of Handout #3 (one per student)

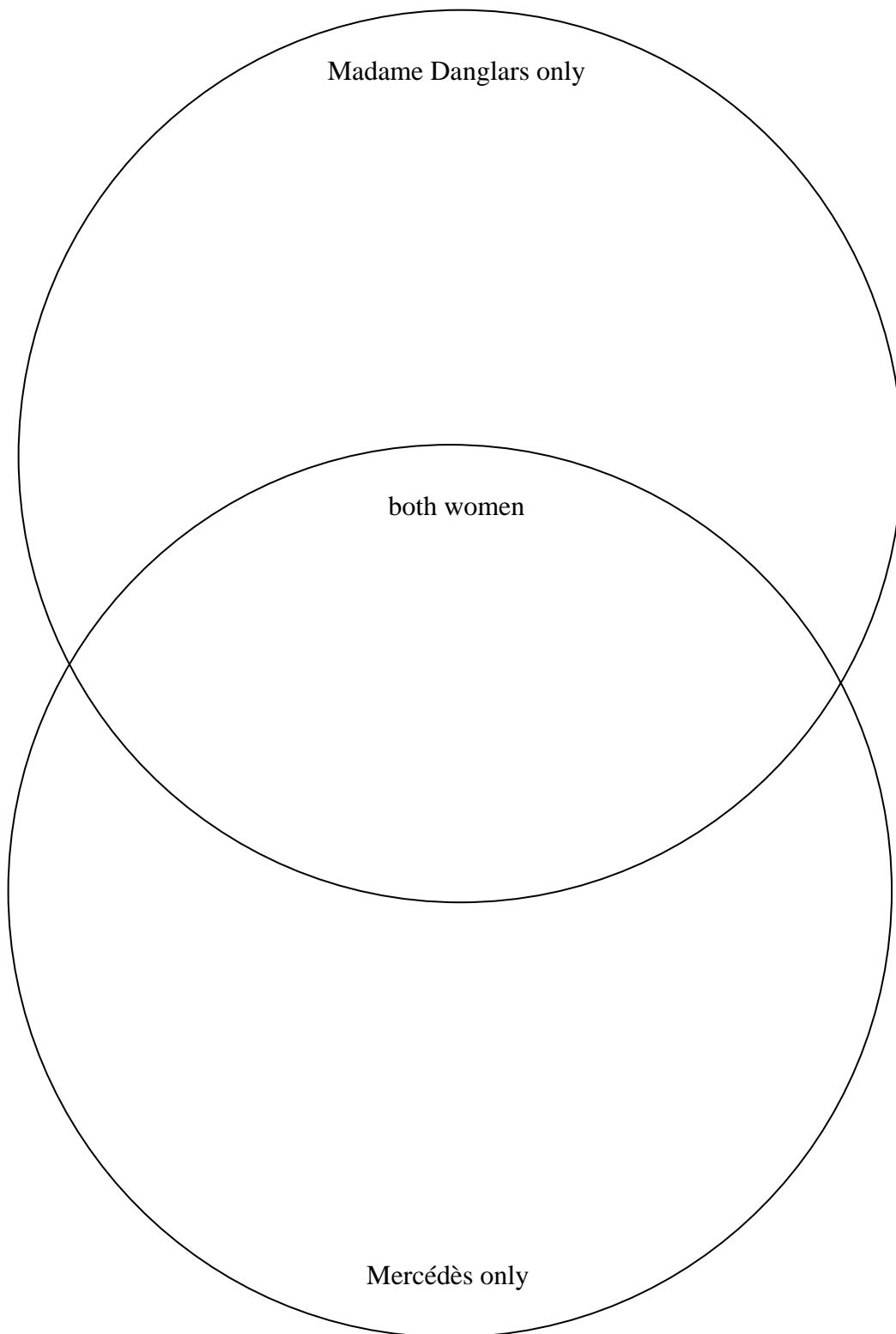
Assessment Template (more than one copy if you have a larger class)

How Did It Go?

Were students able to identify themes within the text? Did they make connections between different passages? Could they use literary analysis to formulate and support a coherent argument? Could they synthesize what they learned into an organized discussion? Did they listen to one another during the discussion? Were they able to build on one another's points? Was the discussion based on the text, with students referencing it often?

Handout #1

Question: Madame Danglars and Mercédès are peers in the story. In what ways are they similar? Do their behaviors contrast? What roles do they play in the revenge on their husbands? Your response to these questions should ultimately analyze attitudes towards gentility and femininity, as explored by Dumas.



Handout #2

The Count of Monte Cristo Essay Rubric

Focus: Evidence, Analysis, Vocabulary

- + Excellent! You have this area mastered (25 points)
- ✓ Satisfactory, but could use some improvement (20 points)
- You need some help; please see me (15 points)

TOTAL SCORE

_____ out of 100

Develops a point of view

Essay begins with a clear point of view (thesis) that:

- provides reader with a central subject and opinion for your paper.
- requires significant evidence to support it (not so specific that you're done in a paragraph)
- addresses the prompt in an original and provocative manner (your specific spin on the text makes readers think--this isn't just a summary of the text!)
- is clear, precise, and sharply focused (easy to understand, and not so general that it can't be proved in a short paper)

Demonstrates critical thinking:

- Analysis clearly relates back to thesis statement and/or topic sentence of body paragraph
- Analysis relates specifically to the evidence--it is firmly rooted in the class text, shows sophisticated understanding of the reading, and "goes to the place of interest"
- Analysis and evidence are layered, not formulaically listed--in other words, there's flow as you build towards proving your thesis!
- The writer avoids ideas that are shallow, cliché, and/or pointedly obvious
- The writer avoids summarizing/restating the text
- The writer avoids misreading of text

Uses examples, reasons, and other evidence to support position:

- The writer provides enough evidence to support every claim
- The writer uses paraphrasing and direct quotation effectively
- Sequencing is logical and effective
- The evidence is cited correctly
- Quotes are represented accurately (no typos or word changes!)

Use of language: vocabulary

- Vocabulary appropriate to audience
- Transitions used skillfully to show the relationship between the analysis and evidence
- Transitions used skillfully to show the relationship between Madame Danglars and Mercédès
- The writer uses advanced vocabulary, rich description, and clear wording.
- The writer uses literary vocabulary
- The writer avoids redundancy and wordiness
- The writer avoids "I," "you," "we," "me," etc.

The Count of Monte Cristo Seminar Prep

Before Reading: On a separate piece of paper, spend 10 minutes responding to the following prompt: "Is revenge ever justified? Can revenge ever go too far? How does a vengeful person know when to stop his/her vengeful acts?"

During Reading: Underline and margin note all of the chapters relating to the de Villefort poisonings. Because you've already read these chapters, you should be able to skim with ease.

Chapter XXVI
Chapter XXVIII
Chapter XXIX
Chapter XLVI
Chapter XXVII
Chapter LII
Chapter LIII
Chapter LX
Chapter LXI
Chapter LXII
Chapter LXIII
Chapter LXIV
Chapter LXVIII
Chapter LXIX

After Reading: On a separate piece of paper, provide thoughtful answers to the questions that follow. "Thoughtful" means that your analysis is articulate, nuanced, and text-based. When possible, you use the literary vocabulary taught over the course of this unit (diction, tone, etc.)

- Is the revenge that Edmond Dantès takes against de Villefort justified? In other words, does the ultimate punishment match the original crime?
- The following characters are all involved in the de Villefort poisonings. Explain what happens to them in connection to the poisonings. Then answer the question: which characters "deserve" what happens to them, and which are hapless victims?
 - Edmond Dantès, Monsieur de Villefort, Valentine de Villefort, Monsieur de Noirtier, Madame de Villefort, Edward de Villefort, Marquis and Marquise de Saint-Méran, Doctor d'Avrigny, Maximilian Morrel
- Is Edmond Dantès responsible for the de Villefort death toll? Explain, and please be specific!

Assessment Template

Seminar Rubric

Observer:	Date:
Reading Item:	Opening Question:

student name:	Comments:	Letter grade for seminar:
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		

Comments (Use these numbers to track them on the rubric)

Positive Behaviors

1. Has an excellent idea. ☺
2. Makes connection back to the text. ☺
3. Attentive to the person speaking ☺
4. Uses transition words to build on the former person's point ☺
5. Asks good questions. ☺
6. Uses the language of dialogue ☺

Negative Behaviors

7. Clutters conversation with irrelevant comments. ☹
8. Needs to listen more carefully- asks for or repeats comments. ☹
9. Uses the language of debate ☹
10. Calls out, interrupts ☹
11. Needs to speak more. ☹
12. Derails conversation ☹

How would you grade the seminar as a whole? (Circle One)

Excellent (A)

Good (B)

Fair (C)

Poor (D/F)