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 **Prestwick House**
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Literature Made Fun!



The Count of Monte Cristo
BY ALEXANDER DUMAS


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All references come from the Signet Classics edition of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, published 2005.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Discussion

Objective: Understanding the nature of the Romantic movement

Activity

The Introduction, by Roger Celestin, discusses *The Count of Monte Cristo* as a romantic novel and cites Alexandre Dumas as a major figure in the Romantic movement. Understanding Romanticism will help you appreciate the novel. Review and discuss the following summary of Romanticism.

It is important for you to understand that Romanticism does not refer simply to a love story, although romantic works may contain such a story. Works in the Romantic tradition are characterized by emphasis on the emotions and imagination rather than on analysis or intellectual processes. Spontaneity, action, and strong emotions of any—and every—kind are all important elements in the romantic tradition. Coincidence, rather than strict cause-and-effect rationality, is often a strong factor in plot development.

The Romantic tradition began late in the eighteenth century and is often associated with the political upheavals of the era, in which the common man—as opposed to the highly educated upper classes—became an important factor in political life and power. Often acting on impulse, an individual could, through daring action, change the course of history, whether that history was national or personal. Many Romantic works are organized around the actions of a hero, although not all of the hero's characteristics are benevolent.

The Romantics celebrated nature, mysticism, and emotions. They often displayed a fascination with human behavior that was outside the normal, including the melancholy, the cruel, and the primitive. Mysticism often surfaces as a fascination with religion and can be coupled with a distrust of organized religion.

In connecting these threads—the strength of the individual, the importance of action, the element of a moral code—Romantic novels could easily feature heroes who were purely good and villains who were purely evil, but this is seldom the case, because the Romanticists were interested in the complexity of the human character and the deep ways in which character and circumstance are intertwined.

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 XXI–XLIV**Characterization**

Objective: Understanding character development; tracing a character through change

Activity

Having escaped from the Château d'If and found the fortune left on the island of Monte Cristo, Edmond is now known as the Count of Monte Cristo. He returns to Marseilles and begins to trace the lives and histories of those he knew when he was arrested.

Make a chart of the disguises Edmond uses in this section of the novel and the purpose of each disguise. The information in this chart will help you understand Edmond's plans for carrying out his vow of vengeance on those who betrayed him.

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

Drama

Objective: Visualizing the action of a novel through acting

Activity

Working in small groups, develop a dramatic interpretation of the scene listed below. Group members can be cast in the roles of Valentine, Mme Villefort, and Monte Cristo.

Choose one method of presenting the scene:

- Act out your parts with dialog that you develop
- Mime the actions as a narrator reads the re-worked scene
- Have each character deliver a monologue reporting the action from his or her own point of view

The scene includes Chapters LXI, "The Secret Door," and LXII, "The Apparition Again." You may read the chapters over in developing your presentation. The presentation should include most of the following points:

- Valentine is in bed recovering from an attempted poisoning.
- She sometimes has hallucinations of people entering and leaving the sickroom.
- One night, the door opens silently, and a figure enters.
- The figure samples the liquid that is in the glass next to her bed and tells her to drink it.
- She recognizes Monte Cristo.
- He reassures her that he has been keeping watch over her all night long as she recovers.
- He tells her that Maximilian is faithful to her and waits for her to recover.
- He reveals that he is living next door and has built a passageway connecting the two houses, so he can watch her during the night.
- He puts a drug into her glass, and she drinks it, recognizing it as a calming drug.
- Monte Cristo persuades Valentine that someone is trying to poison her.
- He tells her to pretend that she is asleep, but to observe who comes to poison her.
- He leaves. After a while, another door opens.
- Someone whispers her name to see if she is asleep.
- This person pours a liquid into Valentine's glass.
- She recognizes her stepmother.
- Mme Villefort leaves, and Monte Cristo returns.
- Monte Cristo helps Valentine understand that Mme Villefort wants her to die so Edward will inherit her money.
- Monte Cristo convinces Valentine that she will never be safe at home, or anywhere else where Mme Villefort can reach her.
- Valentine understands, but she is determined to live for the sake of Maximilian and her grandfather.
- She takes a sleeping pill that the Count gives her.