

Theatre De La Salle *presents*

Les Misérables

SCHOOL EDITION

TEACHER
RESOURCE
GUIDE



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: **LES MISÉRABLES: School Edition**

21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration are embedded in the process of bringing the page to the stage. Seeing live theatre encourages students to read, develop critical and creative thinking, and to be curious about the world around them.

This Teacher Resource Guide includes background information, questions, and activities that can stand alone or work as building blocks toward the creation of a complete unit of classroom work.

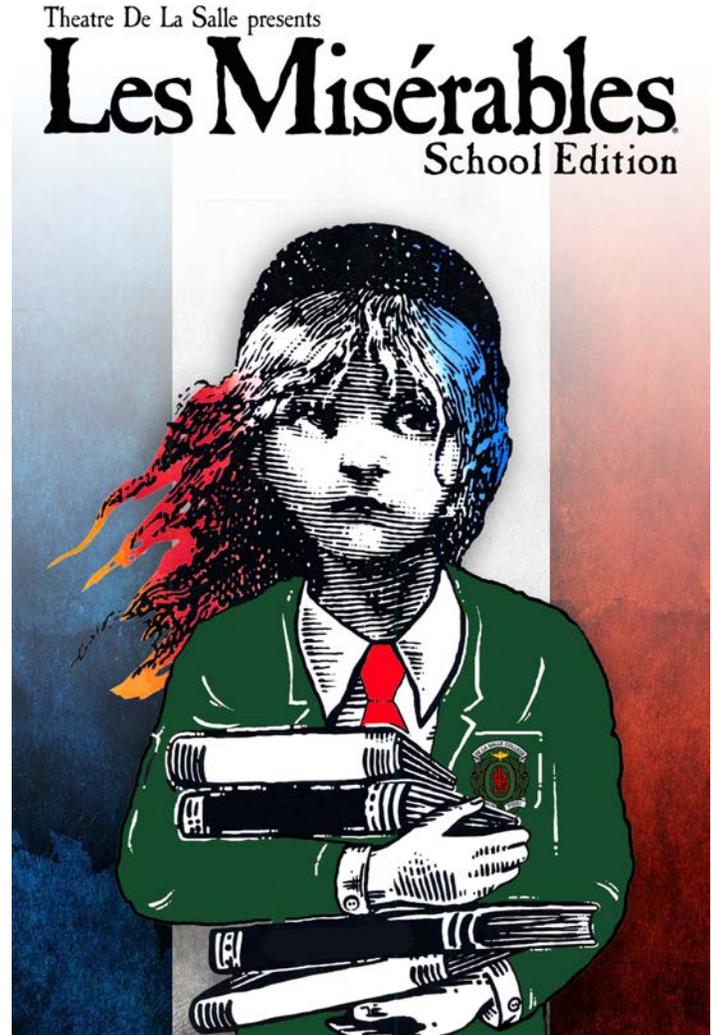
THEATRE DE LA SALLE presents **LES MISÉRABLES!**

*“Will you join in our crusade,
who will be strong and stand with me?”*

To celebrate our 70th anniversary, Theatre De La Salle is proud to present **Les Misérables** — the world’s longest-running musical! A true modern classic based on Victor Hugo’s novel and featuring one of the most memorable scores of all time, this multi-award-winning musical is as groundbreaking today as it was when it first premiered in London in 1985. Composed by Alain Boublil and Claude Michel Schönberg, the School Edition was specially adapted by Cameron Mackintosh and Music Theatre International.

Set against the backdrop of 19th-century France, **Les Misérables** tells an enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice, and redemption — a timeless testament to the survival of the human spirit. Featuring the beloved songs “I Dreamed A Dream,” “Bring Him Home,” “Stars,” “On My Own,” “Master of the House,” “One Day More,” and many more, **Les Misérables** has been seen by more than 70 million people in 44 countries and in 22 languages around the globe, breaking box office records for 35 years. Epic, grand, and uplifting, **Les Misérables: School Edition** packs an emotional wallop that has thrilled audiences all over the world.

In this brand new production presented entirely by students, producer **Michael Luchka** and directors **Glenn Cherny** and **Lisa Pollock** will be joined again by guest director and TheatreDLS alum **Johnny McGroarty**, choreographer **Melissa Jane Shaw**, Musical Director **Chris Tsujiuchi**, and Set Designers **Michael Bailey** and **Jerry McGroarty**, to bring you “the world’s most popular musical.” Scenic design, lighting and sound design, costume design, set and prop construction, stage management, and marketing and promotion will all be done by the students enrolled in De La Salle’s inaugural Musical Theatre Production course with help from industry professionals.



THE ONTARIO CURRICULUM, GRADES 1–8 | The Arts **SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS ELEMENTS OF DRAMA**

B1.2 demonstrate an understanding of the elements of drama by selecting and combining several elements and conventions to create dramatic effects

B2.1 express personal responses and preferences and make connections to themes and issues presented in their own and others’ drama works

B2.2 identify a favourite scene and give reasons for their preference, using correct drama terminology to describe how the elements of drama contribute to its effectiveness

B2.3 identify and give examples of their strengths, interests, and areas for improvement as drama creators, performers, and audience members

B3.2 identify and describe a wide variety of ways in which drama and theatre make or have made contributions to social, cultural, and economic life in a variety of times and places



THEATRE

De La Salle



<https://www.delasalle.ca/arts/theatre-de-la-salle>

At De La Salle College, we understand that being involved in the theatre, and the Arts in general, has very real and measurable educational benefits. Students who participate in the Arts have achieved better overall results in their other classes. 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration are honed in the process of creating live theatre. Working on a musical production from its inception to the final curtain improves learning skills that are necessary in higher education and in the workplace.

CONFIDENCE | IMAGINATION | EMPATHY | COOPERATION | SELF-DISCIPLINE
CONCENTRATION | COMMUNICATION | CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING
PHYSICAL FITNESS | MENTAL HEALTH | EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

The confidence gained from developing performing arts skills applies to school, career, and life!



THEATRE DE LA SALLE

FACTS & FIGURES

➤ De La Salle College is an exciting venue to see live theatre! The school opened in 1951 and included an auditorium that became the home to Theatre De La Salle. During its 70-year history, Theatre De La Salle has staged 28 dramatic productions, 46 musicals, and three musical revue shows.

➤ Brother Andrew spent his first year at Del (1950-1951) developing a glee club and an orchestra before staging the first of his five annual Gilbert and Sullivan musical productions. The female chorus was made up of soprano-voiced boys from the grade school dressed up as girls. The female leads were played by young ladies from local Catholic high schools.

➤ Brother Walter replaced Brother Andrew as musical director, and in 1958 produced the first of his ten musicals. The popular scores of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein counted for eight well-received productions. In 1960, the *Toronto Star* reviewed *Oklahoma* with these words: *The hardest thing to keep in mind is that it is a high school show. The quality is consistently far beyond what might be expected; better, in fact, than any university musical.*

➤ By 1961, boys no longer took female parts as 35 young women took their place with 41 boys from Del to make up the cast of *Carousel*. That year, the leads accompanied Brother Walter to the backstage of the O'Keefe Centre (now the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts) to meet the composer, Richard Rodgers, who was in Toronto on a promotional tour.

➤ Between 1969 and 1987, Theatre De La Salle presented both a drama and a musical in almost every school year.

➤ During the 1980's and early 1990's, Theatre De La Salle thrived under the direction of Ben Cekuta. Memorable productions of *West Side Story* (1980), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1983), *Man of La Mancha* (1985), and *The Mousetrap* (cemented Del productions among Toronto's finest. The school flood of 1989 damaged the auditorium so badly that the theatre was closed for three years. It wasn't until 1993 that the theatre reopened its doors and the stage was put to use again.

➤ Del's theatrical tradition was continued by the private school which opened in 1994. In 1998, DELTA (Del Theatre Arts) was established and gave students the opportunity to take a leadership role in the theatre production process. Student directors Luke Arnott and Robert Kim went on to direct some of the private school's more memorable productions, including *Little Shop of Horrors* (1999) and *Twelve Angry Men* (2002). Classically-trained drama teacher Glenn Cherny directed several dramas, including *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2006) and *Pygmalion* (2008). Musical productions included *The Sound of Music* (2001) and *Annie* (2003).

➤ In 2010, Del alumnus Michael Luchka (Class of '93) revived the original Theatre De La Salle which saw its final curtain come down in 1993. With unprecedented support from the Administration, Parents Association, and Del Alumni, Theatre De La Salle launched a new era with Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (2012) and continues to showcase the many talents of the school's students and staff. The Theatre marked its 65th anniversary with Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* in 2016.

➤ In 2017, Theatre De La Salle staged a 65th anniversary revival of the first musical performed at the College - *The Pirates of Penzance*. Cast members from the original 1951 production joined current cast members on stage for well-deserved cameos.

➤ To mark its 70th anniversary, Theatre De La Salle will proudly present the world's most popular musical - *Les Misérables: School Edition* in April 2020.

2020/2021

**A COURSE for STUDENTS
in Grades 10, 11, and 12
interested in being
ON the STAGE or BEHIND the SCENES!**

MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTION

- ★ SINGING, ACTING, DANCING
- ★ SET DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION
- ★ COSTUME & MAKE-UP DESIGN
- ★ LIGHTING & SOUND TECHNOLOGY
- ★ SPECIAL EFFECTS
- ★ MARKETING & PROMOTION
- ★ MASTER CLASSES WITH GUEST ARTISTS WHO WORK IN THE INDUSTRY

MAKE THE STAGE YOUR CLASSROOM!

For more information, contact the Student Services Department



Students of the first-ever Musical Theatre Production class perform their original Midterm Musical Monologues in January, 2020

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: LES MISÉRABLES: School Edition



COMING TO THE THEATRE!

De La Salle College is an exciting venue to see live theatre! The school was built in 1951 and included an auditorium that became the home of Theatre De La Salle. During its 70-year history, Theatre De La Salle has staged 28 dramatic productions, 45 musicals, and three musical revue shows.

As audience members, you and your students play a vital role in the success of the performances. You are part of a community that creates the theatre experience. For many students, this may be their first time viewing a live theatre production. We encourage teachers to discuss some of the differences between watching a television show, attending a sporting event or viewing a movie at the cinema. Here are a few examples to start the discussion:

- ♦ Students are led into the theatre and seated by an usher.
- ♦ Theatres are built to magnify sound. Even the slightest whisper can be heard throughout the theatre. Remember that not only can those around you hear you, the performers can too.
- ♦ Appropriate responses such as laughing or applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage; they will let you know what is appropriate.
- ♦ Refreshments will be distributed during the Intermission. Photography and videotaping of performances is not permitted.
- ♦ When the houselights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please turn your attention toward the stage.
- ♦ After the performance, you will be dismissed by bus number. Check around your seat to make sure you have all of your personal belongings.

Grade 7 student Audrey Cheng (left) and Grade 5 student Vasili Prangikos (right) gave inspired performances as Jane and Michael Banks in 2019's MARY POPPINS.

*"Let's go fly a kite, up to the highest height!"
The cast and crew proved that "anything can happen if you let it!"*



Stepping BACK in Time with the cast of Theatre De La Salle's 2019 practically-perfect production of MARY POPPINS!



TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: LES MISÉRABLES: School Edition



Rehearsing for the 2020 Theatre De La Salle production of

Les Misérables School Edition



Producer Michael Luchka definitely has a handful with the Grade 12 cast members of TheatreDLS's LES MISÉRABLES when they're having too much fun during rehearsals.



"I didn't see you there, forgive me," says Marius (Matteo De Florentiis) to Cosette (Jody Connors) in a scene from Act 1 of Les Misérables: School Edition.



Alessandro Liberona (left) plays the Factory Foreman who doesn't make life easy for Fantine (Poppy Brookes) in the Act One scene "At the End of the Day"



"Look down and see the beggars at your feet, Look down and show some mercy if you can."
Ensemble members Mira Boyagoda and Sofia D'Onofrio in a scene from the musical.



Jean Valjean (David DeMartin, left) does his best to save Cosette (Audrey Cheng) from the evil Thenardiers played by AJ Bailey and Caitlyn Pinto.
Rosa Robbins as Young Eponine looks on.



"On my own, pretending he's beside me..."
Grade 12 student Angelica Sabilano takes on the iconic role of Eponine in TheatreDLS's production of *Les Misérables*.



Stefania De Martin as Inspector Javert takes sibling rivalry to a new level in a classic confrontation with her brother, David De Martin, as Jean Valjean

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: **LES MISÉRABLES: School Edition**



In a letter to one of his publishers, Victor Hugo said that he wrote *Les Misérables* for a universal audience. He added:

“... social problems do not have frontiers. Humankind’s wounds, those huge sores that litter the world, do not stop at the red and blue lines drawn on maps. Wherever men go in ignorance or despair, wherever women sell themselves for bread, wherever children lack a book to learn from or a warm hearth, *Les Misérables* knocks at the door and says, ‘Open up. I am here for you.’”

More than 130 years later, “huge sores” still litter the world, and Hugo’s words still describe the undying message of his novel.

Les Misérables reminds us that we are each part of the same human family, and that whatever our outward differences may be, our longings for individual liberty and peace are the same.

Around the world, performers and audience members alike have been deeply moved by their exposure to *Les Misérables*. With each new cast and each new audience, the power and the magic of the show continues to grow.

—Excerpted from the MTI study guide on *Les Misérables*.

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Ask students:

- Have you ever had anything stolen from you? How did it make you feel? Would it have mattered if someone had stolen from you to feed his/her family?
- Jean Valjean spends 19 years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his family. Does this punishment seem to fit the crime? How do we decide what is just?
- More than 130 years later, “huge sores” still litter the world, and Hugo’s words still describe the undying message of his novel. What are some of these “huge sores” that you might hear about in the news of our country and the world?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

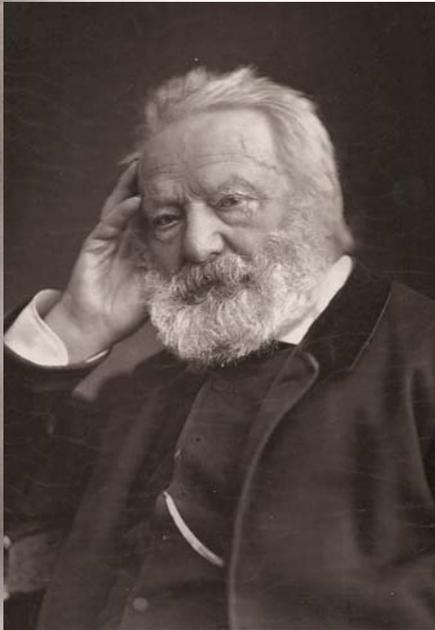
THE STORY and its THEMES

- The students in *Les Misérables* believe that there are things worth fighting for. Do you agree with them? Why?
- The students are taking the law into their own hands. Do you think they are right or wrong? Is such action ever justified?
- Did the students at the barricade die in vain? How do you measure whether the death of a young person in such a circumstance is “worthwhile?”
- Can you imagine ever taking the law into your own hands? Why or why not? If you can envision such a possibility, describe the circumstances.
- What is a value or a belief that you might fight for? How would you go about it?
- Research a 20th or 21st Century student rebellion, such as the American student movement of the 1960s or the Chinese pro-democracy movement of May/June 1989 in Beijing, the Orange Revolution in Kyiv, Ukraine in 2004-2005 or the student protests in Hong Kong in 2019. Compare the motivations of the students - and the outcome - to the experience of the student rebels in *Les Misérables*.
- Think back through the whole performance and find the character you are most like. In a journal entry, explain why you are similar to this particular character. What types of problems do they get into? Could you see yourself getting into a similar position? Write about how you would handle the situation differently, or why you would do the same.

THE THEATRE

- Name three things you noticed about the set. Did the set help tell the story? What sort of set would you have designed?
- What did you like about the costumes? Did the costumes help tell the story? What sort of costumes would you have designed?
- What role did lighting play in telling the story? How did the lights enhance what you were seeing?
- Talk about the actors. Were there moments you were so caught up in the story you forgot you were watching a play?
- Were there any actors who played more than one character? What are some ways you can be the same person but play different characters?

ABOUT VICTOR HUGO



VICTOR HUGO'S enormously successful career covered most of the nineteenth century and spanned both the Romantic and Realistic movements. A great poet, novelist, playwright, essayist, pamphleteer, diarist, politician and moralist, Hugo was a man of immense passion and endless contradictions.

Hugo was born on February 26, 1802. His father, General Joseph Leopold Hugo, was the son of a carpenter who rose through the ranks of Napoleon's citizen army. However, Victor's mother decided not to subject her three sons to the difficulties of army life, and settled in Paris to raise them. Madame Hugo became the mistress of her husband's commanding officer, General Lahorie, who was a father figure to Hugo and his brothers until the General's execution in 1812.

Victor was an excellent student who excelled in mathematics, physics, philosophy, French literature, Latin, and Greek. He won first place in a national poetry contest when he was 17. As a teenager, he fell in love with a neighbour's daughter, Adele Foucher. However, his mother discouraged the romance, believing that her son should marry into a finer family. When his mother died in 1821, Victor refused to accept financial help from his father. He lived in abject poverty for a year, but then won a pension of 1,000 francs a year from Louis XVIII for his first volume of verse. Barely out of his teens, Hugo became a hero to the common people as well as a favourite of heads of state. Throughout his lifetime, he played a major role in France's political evolution from dictatorship to democracy.

He lived in abject poverty for a year, but then won a pension of 1,000 francs a year from Louis XVIII.

In 1822, he married Adele Foucher, who became the mother of his children, Leopold-Victor, Charles-Victor, Francois-Victor, Adele, and Leopoldine.

In 1830, Victor became one of the leaders of a group of Romantic rebels who were trying to loosen the hold of classical literature in France. His play *Hernani*, whose premiere was interrupted by fist-fights between Hugo's admirers and detractors, took a large step towards a more realistic theatre and made him a rich man.

During the next 15 years he produced six plays, four volumes of verse, and the romantic historical novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, establishing his reputation as the greatest writer in France.

In 1831, Adele Hugo became romantically involved with a well known critic and good friend of Victor's named Sainte-Beuve. Victor became involved with the actress Juliette Drouet, who became his mistress in 1833. Supported by a small pension from Hugo, Drouet became his unpaid secretary and travelling companion for the next fifty years.

After losing one of his daughters in a drowning accident and experiencing the failure of his play *Les Burgraves* in 1843, Hugo decided to focus on the growing social problems in France. He was joined in his increasing interest in politics by a number of other Romantic writers, marking the beginning of the Realistic-Naturalistic era in French literature.



Les Misérables

ABOUT VICTOR HUGO

Hugo was a moderate republican who was made a Peer of France in 1845. After the Revolution of 1848 and the founding of the Second Republic, he was elected a deputy to the Constitutional Assembly. Three years later, when Louis Napoleon abolished the Republic and reestablished the Empire, Hugo risked execution trying to rally the workers of Paris against the new Emperor. However, his efforts failed, and he had to escape to Brussels.

As a result, Hugo spent the next decade in exile with his family and Mme. Drouet on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey. During these years, he wrote satires about Louis

Napoleon, returned to his poetry and published several novels including *Les Misérables*, which he had begun years earlier.

Over 3 million spectators followed his cortege to the Pantheon.

When *Les Misérables* was published in Brussels in 1862, it was an immediate popular success in spite of negative reaction by critics, who considered it overly sentimental, and the government, who banned it.

After the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the Empire in 1870, Hugo made a triumphant return to Paris. He remained there through the siege of the city and contributed

portions of his royalties to purchase weapons. He lost two sons, one in 1871 and one in 1873. Although he was elected to the Senate in 1876, poor health caused him to return to Guernsey. Mme. Hugo died in 1868 and Mme. Drouet in 1882.

Hugo died in 1885 at the age of eighty-three. Although he left instructions that his funeral be simple, over 3 million spectators followed his cortege to the Pantheon, where he was buried amid France's great men. Hugo's death came at the end of a century of war, civil conflict, brutally repressed insurrections such as the student rebellion in *Les Misérables*, and social injustice. Because of his belief in the triumph of good over evil and his pleading for tolerance and non-violence, Victor Hugo was the herald of the new democratic spirit.





VICTOR HUGO

The Man, The Artist

Victor Hugo's enormously successful career covered most of the 19th century and spanned both the Romantic and Realistic movements. A great writer, artist, and moralist, Hugo was a man of many talents, high passion, and unwavering conviction.

Hugo was born on February 26, 1802. His father, General Joseph Leopold Hugo, was the son of a carpenter who rose through the ranks of Napoleon's citizen army. However, Victor's mother decided not to subject her three sons to the difficulties of army life, and settled in Paris to raise them. Madame Hugo became the mistress of her husband's commanding officer, General Lahorie, who was a father figure to Hugo and his brothers until the General's execution in 1812.

Victor was an excellent student and excelled in the arts, sciences, and languages. He won first place in a national poetry contest when he was 17. When his mother died in 1821, Victor refused to accept financial help from his father. He lived in abject poverty for a year, but then won a pension of 1,000 francs a year from King Louis XVIII for his first volume of verse. Throughout his lifetime, Hugo played a major role in France's political evolution from dictatorship to democracy and became a hero to the common people.

In 1822, he married his teenage sweetheart, Adele Foucher, who became the mother of his four children: Leopold-Victor, Charles-Victor, Francois-Victor, Adele, and Leopoldine.

In 1830, Victor became one of the leaders of a group of Romantic rebels who were trying to loosen the hold of classical literature in France. His play, *Hernani*, whose premiere was interrupted by fistfights between Hugo's admirers and detractors, took a large step towards a more realistic genre of theatre and made Hugo a rich man.

During the next 15 years, he produced six plays, four volumes of verse, and the romantic historical novel, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, establishing his reputation as the greatest writer in France.

Hugo was also an accomplished artist and his body of work includes more than 4000 drawings. He worked in small scale, only on paper, and usually in pen-and-ink wash with little color. His artistry was "modern," employing techniques of Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism. He originally pursued his artwork as a casual hobby but in his later years, this artistic expression became more important to him.

In 1831, Victor's wife, Adele, became romantically involved with a well-known critic named Sainte-Beuve. At the same time, Victor also became involved with an actress named Juliette Drouet, who later became his mistress in 1833. Supported by a small pension from Hugo, Drouet served as his secretary and traveling companion for the next 50 years.

In 1843, after losing one of his daughters in a drowning accident and experiencing the failure of his play, *Les Burgraves*, Hugo decided to focus on the growing social problems in France. He was joined in his increased interest in politics by a number of other Romantic writers, marking the beginning of the Realistic-Naturalistic era in French literature.

After the Revolution of 1848 and the founding of the Second Republic, Hugo was elected a deputy to the Constitutional Assembly. Three years later, when Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte (Napoleon III) abolished the Republic and reestablished the Empire, Hugo risked execution trying to rally the workers of Paris against the new Emperor. However, his efforts failed, and he was forced to flee to Brussels.

As a result, Hugo spent the next decade in exile with his family and Mme. Drouet on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey off the French coast of

Normandy. During these years, he wrote satires about Napoleon III and published several novels including *Les Misérables*, which he had begun years earlier.

After the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the Empire in 1870, Hugo made a triumphant return to Paris. In 1876, he was elected to the Senate and, despite his failing health, continued to be active in political affairs.

Around this time, Hugo suffered many personal trials: a mild stroke, the mental illness of his daughter who was eventually placed in an insane asylum; his wife's death in 1868 followed by his two sons in 1871 then 1873; and the death of his mistress, Juliette Drouet, in 1883. Hugo died in 1885 at the age of 83. In accordance with his wishes, his funeral was simple, but over 3 million spectators followed his funeral procession to the Pantheon in Paris where he was buried amid France's great men.

Because of his belief in the triumph of good over evil and his pleading for tolerance and non-violence, Victor Hugo was considered a herald of the new democratic spirit. Hugo's death came at the end of a century of war, civil conflict, social injustice, and brutally repressed insurrections such as the student rebellion portrayed in *Les Misérables*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Victor Hugo began to think about his novel, *Les Misérables*, as early as 1829. On the streets of Paris in 1845, he observed an impoverished man being arrested for stealing a loaf of bread, which triggered the novel's action. As the years passed, *Les Misérables* evolved as Hugo's own life experiences shaped his philosophy. To give the story a sense of journalistic truth, he incorporated personal memories of all kinds. For example, in 1841, he saved a prostitute from arrest for assault. Part of his dialogue with police made its way into the novel when Valjean rescues Fantine. By the time Hugo's novel was published in 1862, it had become an epic story within a strong framework of history, philosophy, and political theory.

In spite of negative reaction by critics and the government, who banned it, *Les Misérables* was an instant success and generated more excitement than any other book in the history of publishing. "All the reviews," wrote Hugo, "are reactionary and more or less hostile." Like the musical, critical opinion had absolutely no effect on public interest and bookshopowners literally battled to buy copies for their customers. This phenomenon was echoed in 1985, when the musical version of Hugo's novel opened in London to mostly poor reviews.

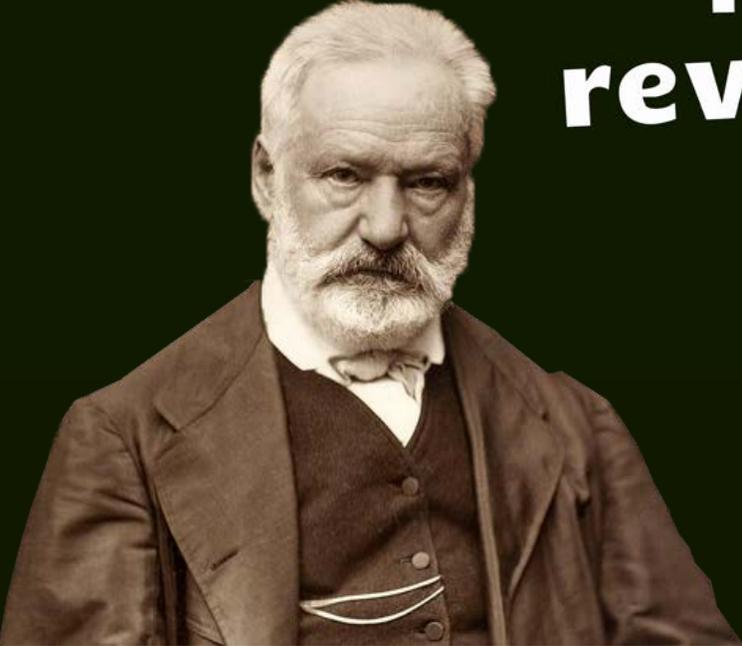
When producer, Cameron Mackintosh, discouraged by the adverse critical response, called the box office, he was greeted by a happily busy ticket salesman. "I'm amazed you managed to get through," Mackintosh was told, "the phones haven't stopped ringing."

Hugo wrote about his book, "I don't know if it will be read by everyone, but it is meant for everyone." The initial French language success was copied worldwide as soon as the book became available in translation.

As with any work of art, which makes a case for social change, the novel acquired many enemies. Conservatives feared the social impact of the story, and the Vatican banned the novel for several years. A French newspaper wrote that if the ideas of the novel were acknowledged, "no part of the social order would remain standing."

Nonetheless, *Les Misérables* has been translated into nearly every language and, during the past century, has become one of the best-selling books in history.





“When dictatorship
is a fact,
revolution
becomes a
right.”

Victor Hugo Quotes

On Revolution and the Republic

What makes a riot? Nothing and everything. Electricity released a little at a time, a flame suddenly shooting out, a roving force, a momentary breath of wind. This breath of wind meets beings that think, brains that dream, souls that suffer, passions that burn, howling torments, and carries them away.

. . . For a long time, I thought the Republic was only a political vehicle . . . I didn't realize that it partook of that essential, absolute truth of which all principles are composed. The Republic is a principle. The Republic is a right. The Republic is the very embodiment of progress.

When dictatorship is a fact, revolution becomes a right.

On *Les Misérables*:

You are right, Sir, when you say *Les Misérables* is written for a universal audience. I do not know whether it will be read by everyone but it is meant for everyone. . . . Social problems go beyond frontiers. Humankind's wounds, those huge sores that litter the world, do not stop at the blue and red lines drawn on maps. Wherever men go in ignorance or despair, wherever women sell themselves for bread, wherever children lack a book to learn from or a warm hearth, *Les Misérables* knocks at the door and says: “open up, I am here for you.”

—Victor Hugo, in a letter to a publisher

On Jean Valjean:

What are the convulsions of a city compared with the riots of the soul? Man is deeper still than the people. Jean Valjean, at that very moment, was a prey to a frightful uprising. Every abyss of rage and despair was gaping once again within him. He also, like Paris, was shuddering on the threshold of a formidable and dark revolution... Of him also, as of Paris, we might say: the two principles are face to face. The angel of light and the angel of darkness are to wrestle on the bridge of the abyss. Which of the two shall hurl down the other? Which shall triumph?

On Prison:

Formerly those harsh places where prison discipline isolates an inmate were composed of four stone walls, a stone ceiling, a strong floor, a folding bed, a barred skylight, a door reinforced with iron, and were called dungeons; but the dungeon came to be discovered too horrible; now it's made of an iron door, a barred skylight, a folding bed, a stone floor, a stone ceiling, and four stone walls, and it's called a punitive detention cell.

He who opens a school door, closes a prison.

Additional Quotes:

Great perils have this beauty, that they bring to light the fraternity of strangers.

Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent.

Nothing else in the world . . . not all the armies . . . is so powerful as an idea whose time has come. One can resist the invasion of an army but one cannot resist the invasion of ideas.

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved; loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.

A great artist is a great man in a great child.

A library implies an act of faith.

If any writer wrote merely for his time, I would have to break my pen and throw it away.

Civil war? What does that mean? Is there any foreign war? Isn't every war fought between men, between brothers?

Curiosity is one of the forms of feminine bravery.

Evil. Mistrust those who rejoice at it even more than those who do it.

Freedom in art, freedom in society, this is the double goal towards which all consistent and logical minds must strive.

I love all men who think, even those who think otherwise than myself.

There is nothing like a dream to create the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victor Hugo." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'H' and 'U'.

ABOUT THE NOVEL

“I’m amazed you managed to get through,” Mackintosh was told, “the phones haven’t stopped ringing.” As with the novel, the story of *Les Misérables* had touched a common chord, and its great success was built on word of mouth.

Hugo wrote about his book, “I don’t know if it will be read by everyone, but it is meant for everyone. It addresses England as well as Spain, Italy as well as France, Germany as well as Ireland, the republics that harbour slaves as well as empires that have serfs. Social problems go beyond frontiers...” To further his goal of presenting the ideas of *Les Misérables* to as wide an audience as possible, Hugo urged his publishers to bring out cheaper editions of the book in small print to make it available to ordinary people.

The book was a sensation in America, whose own civil unrest at the time seemed to many to mirror the events and feelings of the novel.

The initial French language success was copied all over the world as soon as the book became available in translation. The book was a sensation in America, whose own civil unrest at the time seemed to many to mirror the events and feelings of the novel. Indeed, Confederate soldiers read the novel voraciously, calling themselves “Lee’s Miserables.”

As with any work of art pleading

for social change, the novel *Les Misérables* acquired many enemies. Conservatives feared the social impact of the novel, and the Vatican banned it for several years. A theatrical version, written by Hugo’s son Charles, was banned in France, opening instead in Brussels. The French newspaper *The Constitutionnel* wrote that if the ideas of the novel were acknowledged, “no part of the social order would remain standing.”

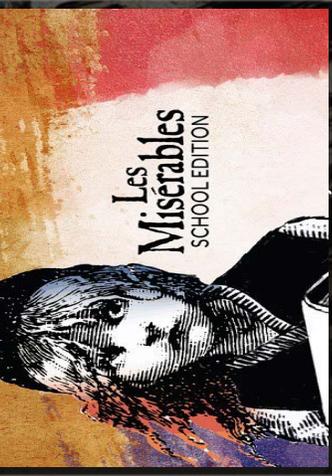
Nonetheless, *Les Misérables* has been translated into nearly every language and, during the past century, has become one of the best-selling books in history.



Les Misérables

Les Misérables

THE MUSICAL



The multiple award-winning LES MISÉRABLES has become a global success on stage and screen, sweeping audiences through an epic tale of broken dreams, passion and redemption, against the backdrop of a nation seething with revolution.

Les Misérables is now the longest running musical in the world and, in October 2010, celebrated its 25th anniversary with a theatrical first – three different productions of the same musical staged at the same time in one city; the star-studded concert at London's The O2 arena, the acclaimed new 25th Anniversary Production (which completed its sell-out UK Tour at London's Barbican Theatre) and the original production, which continues its record breaking run at the Queen's Theatre, London.

The newly re-imagined production has already broken box office records across the UK, America, Japan, Korea, Spain, and Australia. The Oscar-winning film version has become one of the most successful movie musicals of all time.



“A GLORIOUS NEW LES MIZ!”

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE: 1815, DIGNE

After 19 years on the chain gang, Jean Valjean finds that the ticket-to-leave he must display condemns him to be an outcast. Only the Bishop of Digne treats him kindly and Valjean, embittered by years of hardship, repays him by stealing some of the church's silver. Valjean is caught and brought back by the police, but is astonished when the Bishop lies to the police to save him. With this generous act, Valjean decides to start his life anew.

1823, MONTREUIL-SUR-MER

Eight years have passed and Valjean, having broken his parole and changed his name to Monsieur Madeleine, has become a factory owner and Mayor. One of his workers, Fantine, has a secret illegitimate child. When the other women discover this, they demand her dismissal. Desperate for money to pay for medicines for her daughter, Fantine sells her lock of hair, and then joins the whores in selling herself. Utterly degraded, she gets into a fight with a prospective customer and is about to be taken to prison by Javert when 'The Mayor' arrives and demands she be taken to hospital instead.

The Mayor then rescues a man pinned beneath a cart. As a witness to this heroic feat, Javert is reminded of the abnormal strength of convict 24601, Jean Valjean, who, he says, has just been recaptured. Valjean, unable to see an innocent man go to prison, confesses that he is prisoner 24601.

At the hospital, Valjean promises the dying Fantine that he will find and look after her daughter Cosette. Javert arrives to arrest him, but Valjean escapes.

1823, MONTFERMEIL

Cosette, has been lodged with Inn-keepers, the Thénardiens, who horribly abuse her while indulging their own daughter, Éponine. When Valjean arrives to take Cosette away to Paris, the Thénardiens extort money from him to pay off the debt owed for her lodging.

1832, PARIS

Nine years later, there is unrest in the city due to the likely demise of the popular leader, General Lamarque, the only man left in the government who shows any feeling for the poor. A street-gang led by Thénardier and his wife sets upon Jean Valjean and Cosette. They are rescued by Javert, who does not recognize Valjean until he has gone. The Thénardiens' daughter Éponine, who is secretly in love with the student Marius, reluctantly agrees to help him find Cosette, with whom he has fallen in love.

News of General Lamarque's death circulates in the city and a group of politically-minded students stream out into the streets to whip up support for a revolution.

Cosette is consumed by thoughts of Marius, with whom she has fallen in love. Éponine brings Marius to Cosette and then prevents an attempt by M. Thénardier's gang to rob Valjean's house. Valjean, convinced it was Javert lurking outside his house, tells Cosette they must prepare to flee the country.

ACT TWO

1832, PARIS

The students prepare to build the barricade. Marius, noticing that Éponine has joined the insurrection, sends her away with a letter to Cosette, which is intercepted by Valjean. Éponine decides to regain her love at the barricade.

The barricade is built and the revolutionaries defy an army warning to give up or die. Javert is exposed as a police spy. In trying to return to the barricade, Éponine is killed.

Valjean arrives at the barricade in search of Marius. He is given the chance to kill Javert but instead lets him go. The students settle down for a night on the barricade and, in the quiet of the night, Valjean prays to God to save Marius. The next day the rebels are all killed.

Valjean escapes into the sewers with the unconscious Marius. After meeting M. Thénardier, who is robbing the corpses of the rebels, he comes across Javert once more. He pleads for time to deliver the young man to hospital. Javert lets Valjean go and with his unbending principles of justice having been shattered by Valjean's own mercy, Javert kills himself.

Unaware of the identity of his rescuer, Marius recovers in Cosette's care. Valjean confesses the truth of his past to Marius and insists he must go away.

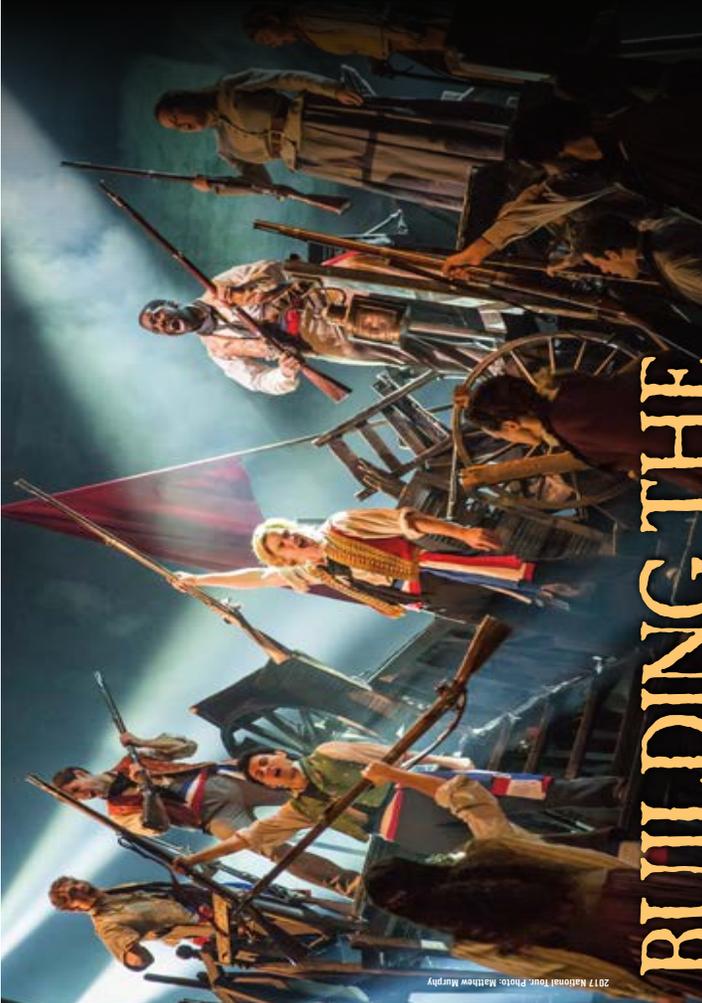
At Marius and Cosette's wedding, the Thénardiens try to blackmail Marius. Thénardier says Cosette's father is a murderer and as proof produces a ring which he stole from a corpse the night the barricade fell. It is Marius's own ring and he realizes it was Valjean who rescued him that night. Marius and Cosette go to Valjean where Cosette learns for the first time of her own history before the elderly Valjean dies.



DID YOU KNOW?

“The phrase ‘les misérables’ (ley mee-zzy-rah-bleh), which has a whole range of subtly shaded meanings in French is much better translated into English as ‘the dispossessed’ or even as ‘the outsiders’ – which can describe every major character in the story in one way or another.”

(Susanne Allyn, historian)



DID YOU KNOW?

The traditional English translation of the French phrase, "Qu'il en mangent de la brochette," is, "Let them eat cake." This phrase has become a famous quote attributed to King Louis XVI's wife, Queen Marie Antoinette. It is believed by some that the Queen made this statement after being told that the French people were suffering due to a widespread bread famine.

Although there is no evidence that this anecdote actually happened, it has sustained a strong symbolic importance in history because it illustrates the ignorance of the French aristocracy during the period of time in which the French Revolution occurred. Interestingly, a biographer of Marie Antoinette mentioned that, during this time, this phrase was particularly useful because the staple food of the French peasantry and the working class was bread, absorbing 50 percent of their income, as opposed to 5 percent on fuel; the whole topic of bread was therefore the result of obsessional national interest. (Lady Antonia Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey*, p. 124.)

THE PARIS BARRICADES

Also known as the June Rebellion and the Paris Uprising of 1832, the Paris Barricades was an unsuccessful, anti-monarchist rebellion of Parisian republicans, mostly comprised of students. It was a small-scale revolt, but was made famous by Hugo's account in *Les Misérables*. The insurrection took place in 1832 over two days: June 5–6, and was the result of mounting turmoil over living conditions between classes as well as the reverse of the 1830 establishment of the July Monarchy under King Louis-Philippe I's rule (1830–1848). These events occurred shortly after the death of the King Louis-Philippe I's leading supporter, President of the Council, Casimir Pierre Périer, who died on May 16, 1832. Adding to the June Rebellion was the recent death of Jean Maximilien Lamarque (1770–1832) who was a French commander during the Napoleonic Wars and later became a member of French Parliament. The June Rebellion was the last eruption of violence associated with the July Revolution.

Victor Hugo described the rebellion in his novel *Les Misérables* and, subsequently, this prime event is highlighted in the musical and films based on the book

'TO BARRICADE OR NOT TO BARRICADE' (A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.)

Barricade [bar-i-keyd] derives from the French word *barrique* (barrel) and is a military term denoting a defensive barrier used in urban warfare. Barricades are usually hastily constructed, as in a street, and aim to stop an enemy or obstruct a passage in order to shut in and defend.

Documented use of French barricades dates back as early as 1569; however, the technique did not become publicly well-known until an uprising in Paris in 1588. The event involved supporters of the Duke of Guise and the Catholic Holy League who successfully challenged the authority of King Henry III.

BUILDING THE BARRICADE

Audience members attending *Les Misérables* often assume that the rebellion in the musical is part of the great French Revolution; however, this is not true. What incited the students and workers to the Paris Barricades in 1832 (the year and event that Victor Hugo used as the climax in his novel, *Les Misérables*) was, in fact, due to the country's economic hardships and a cholera epidemic (1827–1832), which created discontent between the socio-economic classes.

By 1832, the poor people of Paris were deeply affected by the outbreak of disease, namely cholera, which killed many. Among those who died was Jean Maximilien Lamarque, an influential French military commander during the Napoleonic Wars who later became a member of French Parliament. General Lamarque was considered an enemy of the royalists and friend of the common people and his funeral provoked the uprising and the building of the Paris Barricades. During the uprising, approximately 1000 people were injured or killed. Disorder in the country continued through to the mid-1800s and by 1848, fear of revolution throughout Europe became a grave threat.

At the time of the Paris Barricades (June 5, 1832), Victor Hugo was in Paris writing a play. When the battle began, rebel students and workers were on one side and government troops on the other, while Hugo, himself, was trapped in a nearby alley. Hugo stayed out of harm's way

against a wall between the fronts of two shops while gunfire ensued. After the battle, Hugo entered in his diary, that the uprising was a "folly drowned in blood," and that a republic should result from "its own free will." (Benedict Nightingale & Marlyn Palmer, *Les Misérables From Stage to Screen*, p. 12.)

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

(1789–1799) included a series of violent times and periods of unrest resulting in the declaration of France's first republic and the beheading of thousands. The revolution drastically changed France's culture, government, and military. For example, France went from a largely feudal state under the absolute authority of the monarchy to a republic (a state in which the head of government is not a monarch or other hereditary head of state). The change of authority saw the execution of France's King Louis XVI and, in 1799, the new leadership of the French military – the political leader, Napoléon Bonaparte (1769–1821). Outside of France, the revolution resulted in a ripple effect of war throughout Europe.



Louis the XVI



Napoléon Bonaparte



The June Revolution of 1832

The implementation of barricades began its spread from France during the 1780s and in 1830, it was an integral technique used in the Belgian Revolution. By 1848, barricades were being incorporated on an international scale. By the middle of the 19th century, the barricade had become a worldwide symbol of the revolutionary tradition for many students, workers, and political refugees. Its symbolic reference appears in many songs and stories that pay homage to the power of political and social movements.

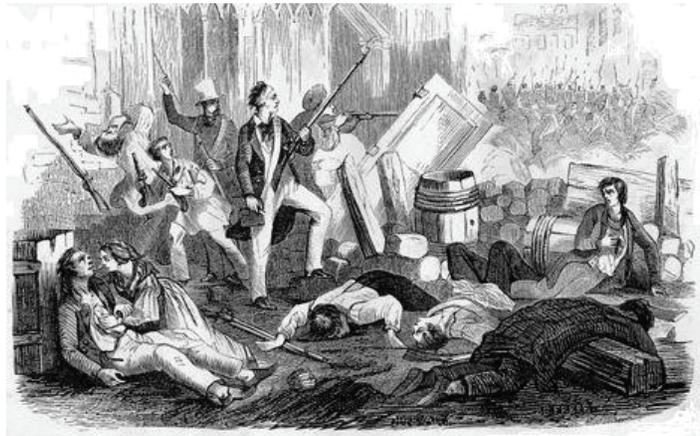
TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: *LES MISÉRABLES: School Edition*



THE JUNE REBELLION

The book *Les Misérables* was first published in France in 1862. Written by famed poet and social activist Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* is considered by literary scholars as one of the greatest novels of the nineteenth century.

The history behind *Les Misérables*, however, is often misunderstood despite the widespread popularity of the musical and now the movie in present-day America. Given the epic scale of the story and its rousing nature, one of the most common misconceptions about *Les Misérables* is that it takes place during the French Revolution of 1789, known for figures such as Robespierre and Marie-Antoinette. In reality, however, *Les Misérables* is set against the backdrop of the June Rebellion of 1832—a small Parisian uprising not even considered a revolution. The June Rebellion lasted two days. The confusion is, in a sense, understandable. In both cases, people, often led by republicans, rose up against monarchies which oppressed them.



E. Frère - wood engraving, designed by Beval

France's political structure also underwent a barrage of changes between 1789 and 1900. After the revolutionaries beheaded Bourbon King Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette in 1793 and the First French Republic began, Napoleon Bonaparte swept in and established an empire in 1804. When he became too powerful, the monarchies and empires of Europe banded together and defeated Napoleon, sending him into exile. These states re-established the monarchy in France, sitting Louis XVIII on the throne. Napoleon escaped, chased Louis XVIII off the throne, and ruled France again as emperor for about one-hundred days. Europe ganged-up on Napoleon once again and took him down at the Battle of Waterloo. He was then exiled a second time.

Louis XVIII returned to the throne and ruled as a constitutional monarch. His younger brother Charles X took over after him. Charles X was not so keen on the idea of a constitutional monarchy and tried to restore the Bourbon monarchy to its former, less democratic glory. Needless to say, he was not very popular. The people rebelled in another revolution, the July Revolution of 1830. This revolution deposed Charles X. Rather than allowing the next descendent of the Bourbon family to become king, the Chamber of Deputies (a democratic body like the American House of Representatives) named a king from another, related family, the Orleans, Louis Philippe I. This new monarchy was a constitutional, more democratic monarchy—in a symbolic gesture, Louis Philippe I was named “king of the French” instead of “king of France” like his predecessors.

Many idealistic students and republicans, however, felt the Chamber of Deputies had betrayed them, only trading one king for another. So, they rebelled again in the June Uprising of 1832, as seen in *Les Misérables*.

They lost miserably and another revolution would not happen until 1848, when the monarchy would fall to the Second Republic. This republic, however, only lasted four years before its first real president named himself emperor. He would rule France until 1870, when the country finally established a durable Third Republic which lasted until the Nazi's overtook France in World War II.

— *Classic of the Month: Les Misérables in Historical Context* by Michelle Gaesor

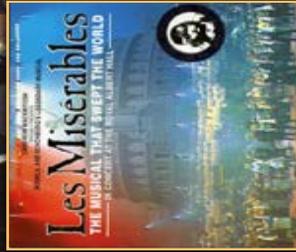
<https://thomodernmanuscript.wordpress.com/2013/01/04/classic-of-the-month-les-miserables-in-historical-context/>

GO FIGURE

(Facts, figures & more on the world-wide phenomenon)



LES MISÉRABLES has been translated into 22 different languages. Productions have played in 44 countries and over 349 cities with over 60 professional companies. The production has played over 53,000 performances to nearly 70 million people worldwide.



LES MISÉRABLES celebrated the 10th Anniversary of its world premiere on October 8, 1995. The 10th Anniversary Concert was filmed for television and has since been seen by over 4 million viewers in the UK. The video has gone on to sell over 1.7 million copies worldwide.



The London production of LES MISÉRABLES is the world's longest running musical.



Since 1897, there have been over 50 film versions. The most recent film of LES MISÉRABLES (the musical) was in 2012 and was produced by Working Title Films and distributed by Universal Pictures. This award-winning film was directed by Tom Hooper, scripted by William Nicholson, Alain Boublil, Claude-Michel Schönberg and Herbert Kretzmer, and stars an ensemble cast led by Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe, Anne Hathaway, and Amanda Seyfried. This 2012 movie musical has become one of the most successful of all time winning three 2013 Academy Awards.



2014 BROADWAY CAST

There are approximately 101 cast and crew directly involved in every performance. Each performance entails some 392 costumes consisting of over 5000 items of clothing and 85 wigs.



There have been over 47 cast recordings of LES MISÉRABLES



The LES MISÉRABLES Schools' Edition was launched in the USA on May 10, 2001 and in the UK on October 14, 2002. Since then there have been over 3,000 school productions performed by over 150,000 school children in the UK, US and Australia making it the most successful musical ever produced in schools.



LES MISÉRABLES has won over 140 major theatre awards including an Olivier, Tony® & Grammy®.

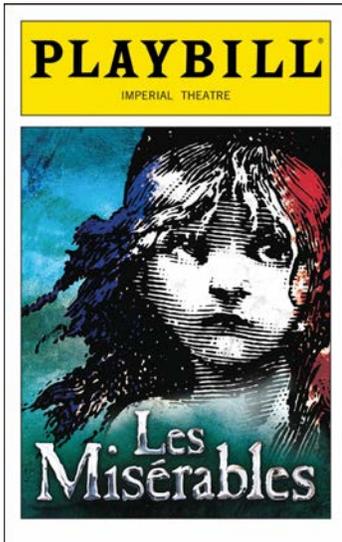
From *The Simpsons* to *South Park* and *Glee* to Susan Boyle on *Britain's Got Talent* LES MISÉRABLES has been referenced in countless TV shows, plus animations, books, radio broadcasts, comics, plays, and even games.

TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE: **LES MISÉRABLES: School Edition**



The Crusade Continues...

LES MISERABLES - The Musical (1985)



The sung-through musical was adapted from French poet and novelist Victor Hugo's 1862 novel by Claude-Michel Schönberg (music), Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel (original French lyrics), and Herbert Kretzmer (English lyrics). The original French musical premiered in Paris in 1980. Its English-language adaptation by producer Cameron Mackintosh premiered in London in October 1985 and on Broadway in 1986, winning the Tony Award for Best Musical. A 10th, 25th, and 30th Anniversary Concerts were staged to celebrate the second longest-running musical in the world.



Do you hear the people sing? The London and Broadway premieres of *Les Misérables* in 1985 and 1986 broke box office records and immediately made the show "the world's most popular musical."

LES MISERABLES - The Film (2012)

Following the release of the 1985 musical, a film adaptation was mired in "development hell" for over ten years, as the rights were passed on to several major studios, and various directors and actors considered. In 2011, producer Cameron Mackintosh sold the film rights to Eric Fellner, who financed the film with a budget of \$61 million. Directed by Tom Hooper, the film was distributed by Universal and featured an ensemble cast led by Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe, Anne Hathaway, Eddie Redmayne, Amanda Seyfried, Helena Bonham Carter, and Sacha Baron Cohen. It grossed over \$441 million worldwide. The film received generally favourable reviews, including 8 Academy Award nominations.

LES MISERABLES - The Miniseries (2019)

Victor Hugo's masterpiece *Les Misérables* arrived on television screens in a six-part adaptation by multi award-winning screenwriter Andrew Davies. This version hews much more closely to Victor Hugo's book, a five-volume, 365-chapter novel that over the course of its complex plot explores history, law, politics, religion and ideas about justice, guilt and redemption. *Fiduciary Bank*. The *New York Times* hailed it as a "new version of *Les Misérables*" with "less singing, more misery". Dominic West stars as fugitive Jean Valjean, with David Oyelowo as Inspector Javert and Lily Collins as the luckless single mother Fantine. Love, death, and the struggle for social justice in early 19th-century France feature in this beautifully faithful retelling of one of the world's most beloved stories.



The star-studded 2012 film adaptation of *Les Misérables* earned 8 Academy Award nominations and won 3 Golden Globes, including one for Best Picture.



A powerful 6-part adaptation of Victor Hugo's classic novel was produced by the PBS and Masterpiece in partnership with the BBC and starred award-winning actress Olivia Colman as the villainous Madame Thenardier.

The Many Faces of Jean Valjean

Ramin Karimloo
(Broadway Revival, 2014)

Michael Burgess
(Original Canadian Cast, 1989)

Colm Wilkinson
(Original London and Broadway, 1985/86)

Hugh Jackman
(Motion Picture, 2012)

Do you hear the people sing?



Famous "Les Mis" Faces

Anne Hathaway

(Fantine, Motion Picture, 2014)

Matt Lucas

(Thenardier, 25th Anniversary Concert, 2010)

Gaetan Matarazzo

(Gavroche, Broadway, 2014)

Nick Jonas

(Marius, 25th Anniversary Concert, 2010)

Do you hear the people sing?



The Creative Team

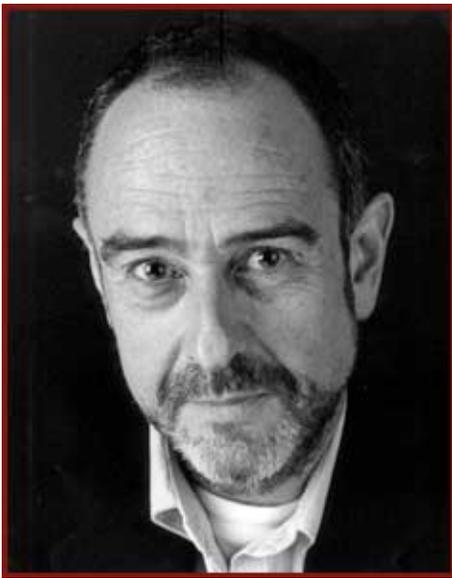
Alain Boublil (Conception, Book and Original

French Lyrics) Born in Tunisia, Alain Boublil emigrated to Paris at the age of 18. He worked in music publishing before writing his first lyrics for the French pop song world. After discovering the existence of musical theatre, he started working with Claude-Michel Schönberg, another composer inhibited by the three-minute song format. Over 20 years, their partnership gave birth to *La Revolution Française* and the award-winning *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* and *Martin Guerre*. He has also produced with Claude-Michel the major cast albums for all their shows. He lives in London and is the proud father of four sons.

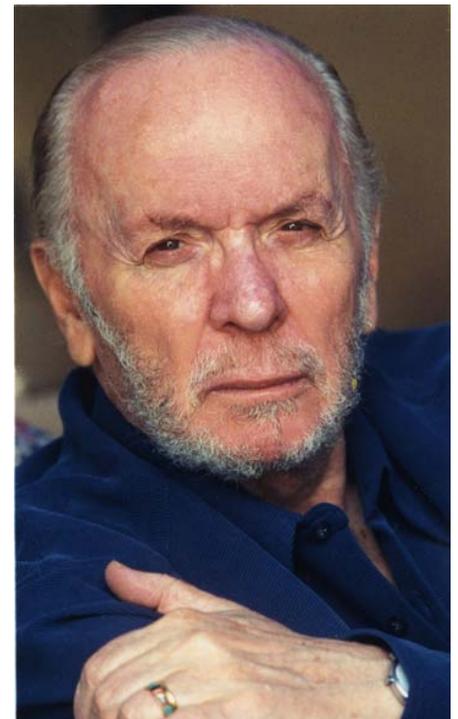


Claude-Michel Schönberg (Music and Book) Born in 1944 of

Hungarian parents, Claude-Michel Schönberg began his career a singer, writer and producer of popular songs. He wrote the musical score of *La Revolution Française* (Paris, 1973), *Les Misérables* (Palais des Sports, Paris 1980 and London 1985) and *Miss Saigon* (1989). Since then he has also supervised overseas productions of *Les Misérables* and *Miss Saigon* and co-produced several international cast albums of his shows. *Martin Guerre* opened at The Prince Edward Theatre, London in July 1996. A new version premiered at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds in December 1998, which had its U.S. premiere at The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in September 1999 and subsequently toured America. He lives in Paris with his wife and two children.



Herbert Kretzmer (Lyrics) was born in South Africa, where he began his journalistic career. He has lived in London since the mid-fifties, pursuing twin careers as a newspaperman and lyricist. In 1960, he joined the staff of the *Daily Express* and later became its chief drama critic, a post he held for 18 years. From 1979 to 1987 he wrote television criticism for the *Daily Mail*. As a lyricist for three decades, he has worked with the French star Charles Aznavour and together they wrote such enduring standards as “She” and “Yesterday When I Was Young.” Kretzmer wrote the book and lyrics of the West End musical *Our Man Crichton* and the lyrics for *The Four Musketeers* which ran for more than a year at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. He has been elected a Chevalier of L'Ordre Des Arts Et Des Lettres and received the Jimmy Kennedy Award (a division of the Ivor Novello Awards) for services to songwriting.



Les Misérables

Super Fast Show Synopsis

Jean Valjean is a man of about 45 years of age who's been imprisoned for 19 years because he stole a loaf of bread and tried to run from the police. Officer Javert tells Valjean he will be released on parole and Valjean gets excited until he realizes no one wants to hire him to work since he's been marked as a criminal. He meets a kind Bishop and tries to steal silverware from him, but is caught on the run. The Bishop says it's no big deal and gives Valjean more silver to start his life anew, and then is never seen again.

Fast-forward about eight years, and Valjean has used the silver to establish a new identity as a wealthy factory owner and the mayor of a town. Fantine gets sacked from working at his factory because she has an illegitimate child, and she then turns to prostitution for money. More bad luck as she encounters an abusive customer, gets in a fight, and Javert comes to ruin the day and arrest her. Luckily Valjean comes to save the day and brings Fantine to the hospital, where she becomes delirious from illness and dies right after Valjean promises to save her daughter Cosette. Death toll: 1. Javert arrives to arrest Valjean after discovering his true identity, but after a heated confrontation Valjean gets away to save Cosette from the Thénardiens, who we discover are really awful people.

Nine years later Paris government is crazy, people are poor, and we meet several supporting characters that we'll become really attached to. The Thénardiens are up to their usual tricks, and their daughter Éponine also takes part in their schemes. A student named Marius has a brief encounter with a now-teenaged Cosette, and falls deeply in love with her. Cliché love-at-first-sight subplot: check. He gets Éponine to take him to Cosette's home, and, after Thénardier tries to ruin the day Éponine saves the day. Unfortunately for Marius, Valjean becomes paranoid and takes off with Cosette. Meanwhile, the students prepare for the 1832 Paris Uprising.

The students build a barricade, and Javert disguises himself as a rebel and volunteer spy. Éponine comes by dressed as a boy to participate in the fight, and Marius sends her to deliver a farewell letter to Cosette, thereby breaking Éponine's heart because she loves him. Battle ensues, Éponine gets shot and dies. Death toll: 2. Valjean comes to the barricade and successfully helps out the students, and is then invited to execute Javert after the students discover his betrayal. Shocking turn of events: Valjean sets Javert free!

The next day the students are still alone and no one else in Paris is fighting. Gavroche, a boy who's been helping out, tries to get ammunition for the students but gets shot in the process. Death toll: 3. Rebels refuse to surrender to the army, and then the battle escalates and everyone except Valjean and Marius die. Death toll: high. Valjean runs into Javert while carrying an unconscious Marius on his back and convinces Javert to let them pass. Javert, shaken in his beliefs, throws himself off a bridge. Death toll: high + 1.

People mourn the students, and Valjean leaves after confessing to Marius that he is an escaped convict. Cosette and Marius marry; Valjean grows old and awaits death. Cosette and Marius arrive to see Valjean in his last moment, and then he dies. Fin!

The Characters

Jean Valjean – an ex-convict striving to break through prejudice, the past and his own anger to build a new life for himself. A man who has made some poor choices, but who redeems himself repeatedly with acts of selfless generosity and love.

Inspector Javert – a man of duty who relentlessly hunts Valjean through the years when he breaks parole. He sees the world and its people in terms of black and white and believes that no one – including himself – is capable of change or redemption.

Fantine – a woman who has been abandoned by her lover and who seeks to support herself and her child, **Cosette**, first by reputable work and then by selling everything she has, including her body. Life has not been kind to her.

Cosette – adopted by **Valjean** after her mother's death, **Cosette** has been protected and raised, unaware of the pasts of her mother or adopted father. She falls in love with the student **Marius**, upon their first meeting on the streets of Paris.

Marius – a young student who is searching for himself and his purpose through his studies and in the revolutionary ideas of his peers. He is a casual friend of **Eponine**, but his heart is won in a chance meeting with **Cosette**.

Eponine – the daughter of **Cosette's** foster parents, the **Thenardier's**, she has followed in her parents' footsteps to a life on the streets, taking what she needs and wants from anyone not strong enough to protect it. The one thing she cannot have is the love of **Marius**.

M. & Mme Thenardier – a reprehensibly opportunistic couple who survive by robbing, cheating and looking out for themselves above all. Their parenting of **Eponine** is limited to teaching her the tricks of their trade and including her in their gang consisting of **Montparnasse, Babet, Brujon** and **Claquesous**. They would sell out anyone if the price was right.

Gavroche – a child of the streets who has made his way successfully on his own with intelligence, a sense of honor, and a cocky courage that especially endears him to the group of students who meet at the ABC Cafe.

The students, led by **Enjolras**, see themselves as leaders in the coming revolution. When the time is right, they believe “the people” will join them in the fight to make a better world. Each of them – **Marius, Combeferre, Feuilly, Courfeyrac, Joly, Grantaire, Lesgles** and **Jean Prouvaire** – has invested in this dream and will join his comrades at the barricade.

The Bishop of Digne – a loving and humble man who affirms **Valjean's** goodness and humanity and offers him a way out of despair.

The ensemble of men and women will play a variety of parts; including workers, warders, whores, drinkers, sailors, constables, convicts and guests at a wedding.

And remember
The truth that once was spoken,
To love another person
Is to see the face of God.

THE CHARACTERS

QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION IDEAS

- What is Hugo's view of human nature? Is it naturally good, flawed by original sin, or somewhere between the two?
- Describe how Hugo uses his characters to describe his view of human nature. How does each character represent another facet of Hugo's view?
- Discuss Hugo's undying belief that man can become perfect. How does Jean Valjean's life illustrate this belief?
- In the end, what does Jean Valjean prove with his life?
- Javert is a watchdog of the legal process. He applies the letter of the law to every lawbreaker, without exception. Should he have applied other standards to a man like Jean Valjean?
- Today, many believe, like Javert, that no mercy should be shown to criminals. Do you agree with this? Why?
- What does Javert say about his past that is a clue to his nature?
- What finally destroys Javert? Hugo says he is "an owl forced to gaze with an eagle." What does this mean?
- Discuss the Thénardiens as individuals living in a savage society who have lost their humanity and become brutes. Are there people in our society who fit this description?
- Compare Marius as a romantic hero with the romantic heroes of other books, plays or poems of the romantic period.
- What would Eponine's life have been like if she had not been killed at the barricade?
- Although they are only on stage a brief time, both Fantine and Gavroche have vital roles to play in *Les Misérables* and a deep impact on the audience. What makes them such powerful characters? What do they have in common? Name some other characters from literature that appear for a short time, but have a lasting impact.



Les Misérables



“You are right, Sir, when you say that
Les Misérables is written for a universal audience.
I don't know whether it will be read by everyone,
but it is meant for everyone”

Victor Hugo

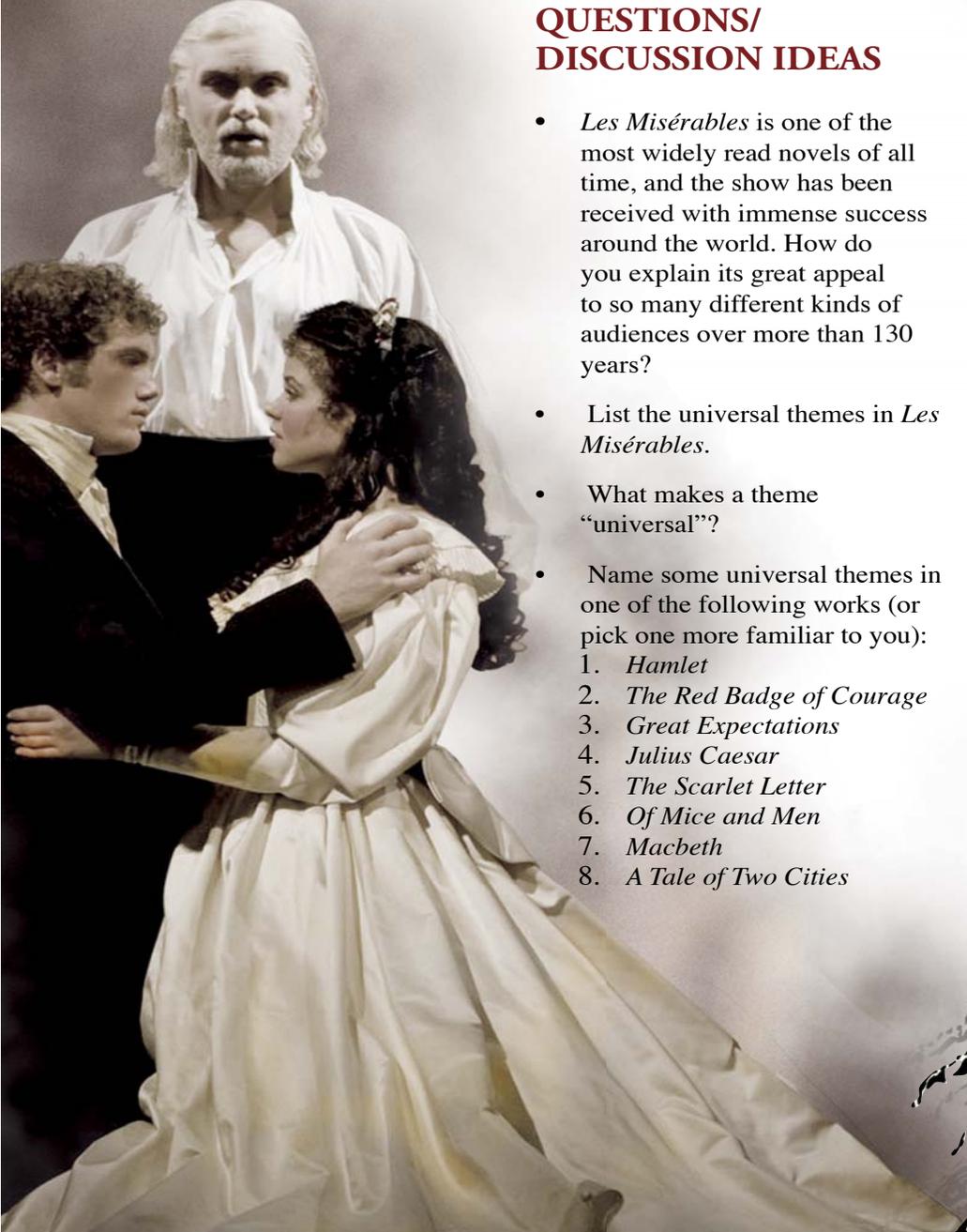
THE UNIVERSAL STORY

QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION IDEAS

- *Les Misérables* is one of the most widely read novels of all time, and the show has been received with immense success around the world. How do you explain its great appeal to so many different kinds of audiences over more than 130 years?
 - List the universal themes in *Les Misérables*.
 - What makes a theme “universal”?
 - Name some universal themes in one of the following works (or pick one more familiar to you):
 1. *Hamlet*
 2. *The Red Badge of Courage*
 3. *Great Expectations*
 4. *Julius Caesar*
 5. *The Scarlet Letter*
 6. *Of Mice and Men*
 7. *Macbeth*
 8. *A Tale of Two Cities*
- Why have these works stood the test of time, while other works have been forgotten?
 - What themes do they share with *Les Misérables*?

ASSIGNMENTS/ RESEARCH AND WRITING PROJECTS

- Relate the themes of *Les Misérables* to events occurring in your community, England, or the world today. After reading or seeing *Les Misérables*, describe how it has changed the way you think about these events.



Les Misérables



Look down and see the beggars at your feet
Look down and show some mercy if you can
Look down and see the sweepings of the street
Look down, look down upon your fellow man!

THE HOMELESS AND THE POOR

THE BASIC problem central to Hugo's work is stated in its title: *Les Misérables*, or "the miserable ones." Today, we would call them the poor, or the homeless. Poverty is an international problem which continues to grow every year.

QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION IDEAS

- How do you feel about the homeless and the poor?
- Who do you feel is responsible for their problems? Themselves? The government? Society in general? Why?
- How do you think poor people feel about the way they are treated?
- In *Les Misérables*, the beggars sing "When's it going to end? When we gonna live? Something's gotta happen now or something's gonna give"; what do they mean by this?
- In the story of *Les Misérables*, what reforms does Victor Hugo indirectly or directly advocate to fight social injustice?
- How do Hugo and the creators of the musical show the audience what social action is needed to correct these evils?
- Each of the characters in the story deal with the problem of

Les Misérables in a different way. Describe how each of these characters see the poor:

1. Jean Valjean
2. The Bishop of Digne
3. Javert
4. Enjolras
5. Thénardier

- Which of these viewpoints do you agree with? Which do you think Victor Hugo agreed with?

ASSIGNMENTS/ RESEARCH AND WRITING PROJECTS

- Hugo attempted to convince his audience that the poor and the outcast are worth saving. In our society, is this belief commonly held? Why or why not?
- Explore the conditions under which most common people worked in Hugo's time. What kinds of factory conditions were they forced to endure? How do they differ from conditions workers deal with today? Explore the influences of unions, child labour laws, environmental protection laws.
- Alain Boublil was influenced to begin the musical of *Les Misérables* after the character of the Artful Dodger in the musical *Oliver!* (based on Charles Dickens' novel

Oliver Twist) brought to mind a singing Gavroche. Trevor Nunn and John Caird used techniques on *Les Misérables* they developed while directing *Nicholas Nickleby*, an adaptation of Dickens' novel.

- Compare Dickens and Hugo as authors and social crusaders
- Compare the social problems and solutions in *Les Misérables* to situations addressed in works of Dickens such as: *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, *A Christmas Carol*.
- Compare Victor Hugo and his work in *Les Misérables* with the work of one of these modern social crusaders: George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Miller, J. Edgar Hoover.

Les Misérables



Now every door is closed to me
Another jail, another key, another chain
For when I come to any town
They check my papers
And they find the mark of Cain

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION IDEAS

When we first meet Jean Valjean, he has been in prison for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread. The harsh punishment for theft in the 19th Century was rooted in the belief that theft was a crime against the entire community and should be punishable by extreme means, no matter how petty the crime.

- How do we think about theft in our society?
- Should all crimes be punished in the same way? Should the reason behind a crime have anything to do with the punishment?
- Have you ever had anything stolen from you? How did it make you feel? Would it have mattered if someone had stolen from you to feed his/her family?

When Valjean is released from prison he is given a yellow ticket of leave, effectively branding him a criminal to all he meets, making it impossible for him to lead a normal life again.

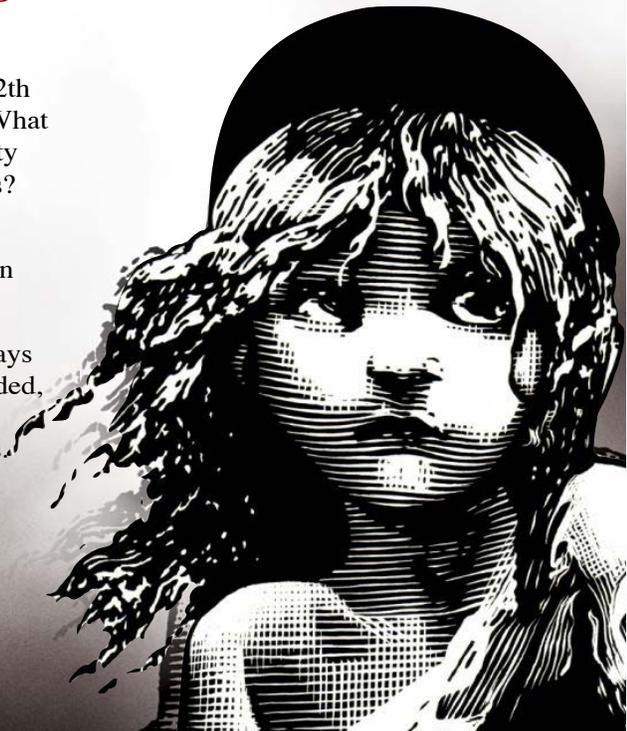
- How does our society treat people on parole, or ex-convicts? Are they able to lead normal lives again? Why or why not?
- A great percentage of convicts released from prison end up back in jail soon after. Why is this, and what does it say about our “rehabilitation” system?

ASSIGNMENTS/ RESEARCH AND WRITING PROJECTS

- Trace the concept of crime and punishment from the 12th through the 20th Century. What can you learn about a society from how it treats criminals?
- Do you believe we have an effective system of justice in England? Why or why not?
- The figure of Justice is always portrayed as being blindfolded, that is, completely blind to anything but objective facts.

- Write an essay about your thoughts on “blind justice”. Is justice ever completely blind? Is it ever completely blind in *Les Misérables*?
- Both Jean Valjean and Thénardier commit crimes in *Les Misérables*: Valjean first steals food to feed his family, then breaks parole when he is treated like an outcast by society, while Thénardier commits fraud and robbery for his own ends. Remember the blindfolded figure of Justice: should Valjean and Thénardier be treated differently by the Justice system? Is there a place for mercy in the Law? How so?

Les Misérables



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•PREJUDICE

*IF I SPEAK, I AM CONDEMNED
IF I STAY SILENT, I AM DAMNED!
WHO AM I?*

In Nazi Germany, Jews had to wear a yellow Star of David, always sown on their clothes, branding them as outcasts of society. Many hid the fact that they were Jewish. Even today, many people change their names to hid their heritage.

Jews. Muslims. The Homeless. Refugees.
Immigrants. LGBTQ+ individuals.

Can you name other groups of people who are treated as outcasts of our society?

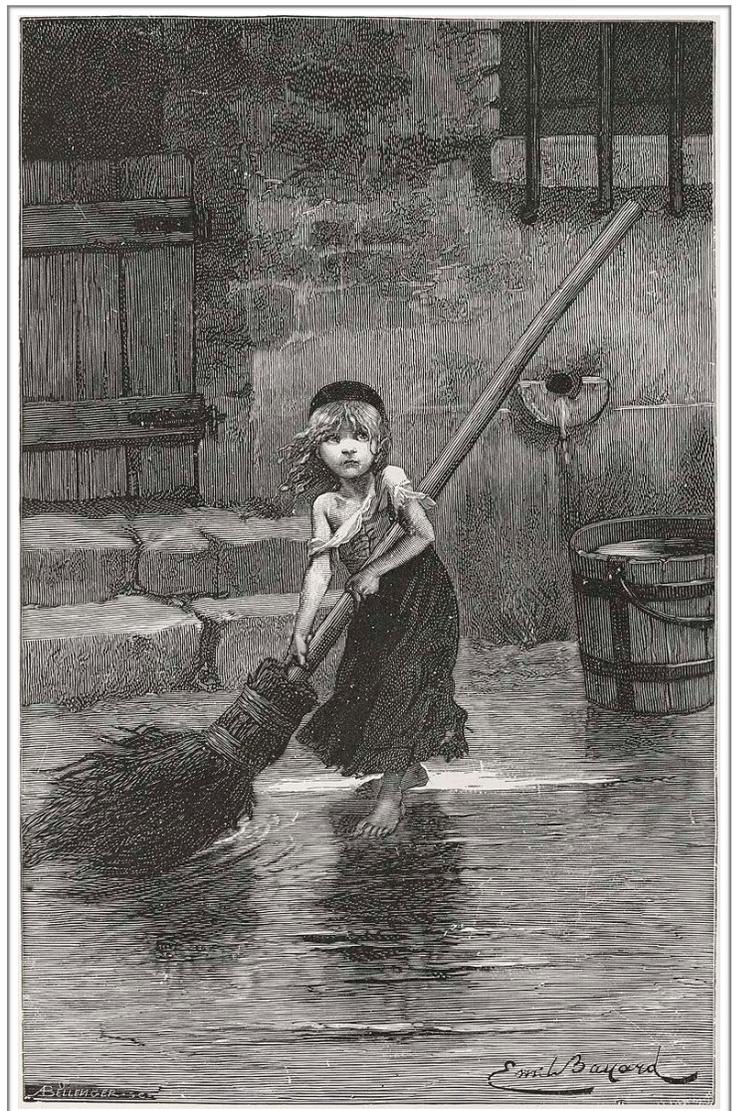
- Have you ever been “pre-judged” because of the way you look, dress, or think?
- Have you yourself ever felt prejudice towards an outcast? Why?

Illustration of *Cosette Sweeping*
by Emile Bayard, 1862

This image was reproduced in Victor Hugo’s novel in 1887 and on the cover of the original French concept album in 1980.

The illustration became the basis of the now world-famous *Les Misérables* logo.

PREJUDICE is to pre-judge, or judge before you see the facts.





POST-SHOW

Writing Assignments,
Projects and Discussions

M. Les Misérables

DISCUSSION TOPICS



Did you enjoy *Les Misérables*?
What did you like the most?

Was there any part of *Les Misérables* you didn't like?
Why was this?

Who was your favourite character/s and why?
In what way were they important to the story?

Could you identify any of the characters with people you
see around you today?

Who are they and where would you find them?

Did you have a favorite *Les Misérables* production
number and why was it important to the story?

Did the musical choices propel or hold back the
narrative of the piece?

How did the choreography support the story?

What themes do you see woven throughout the piece?

What was the most effective element of the set?
Why do you think so?

Was there a particular costume or set of costumes which
stood out to you? Why was this?

How well do you think staging supported the depiction
of this time and place in history?

What classic imagery was created by a combination of
the staging elements?

How effective was the lighting in creating day and night
and the city streets verses indoor scenes?

Were there elements of the production that you believe
did not work to enhance the story?

Why do you believe this and how would you have done
this differently?

Would you have liked to have lived in Paris during this time?
What historical references could you see woven
throughout *Les Misérables*?

What elements of French culture could you identify in
the libretto, if any?

What do you think Jean Valjean and Javert, learned
about each other and themselves on the journey?
What did you learn from them?

If you were a character from *Les Misérables*, who would
you be and why?

Were there controversial issues raised in the piece?
Are these issues resolved or still relevant today?

**MASTER OF THE HOUSE, QUICK TO CATCH YER EYE
NEVER WANTS A PASSERBY TO PASS HIM BY
SERVANT TO THE POOR, BUTLER TO THE GREAT
COMFORTER, PHILOSOPHER, AND LIFELONG MATE!**

FROM PAGE TO STAGE

**HERE THEY TALKED OF REVOLUTION.
HERE IT WAS THEY LIT THE FLAME.
HERE THEY SANG ABOUT TOMORROW
AND TOMORROW NEVER CAME**

Les Misérables began its life on the page as a novel written in 1845, before the story was transferred into a musical theatre libretto and the story told through its music, lyrics, staging, lighting, sound, special effects, costumes and wigs, creating Paris on stage during the French Revolution.

QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION IDEAS

- Explore processes of transferring a story from a classic novel to the stage.
- How is the story told in the novel and how are the characters portrayed in its pages?
How is this different in the musical?
- What challenges would be faced concerning the novel's setting and environment in translating the story to the stage?
- How effectively is this story translated in the musical theatre production?

ASSIGNMENTS/ RESEARCH AND WRITING PROJECTS

- Research the history and the place in time of the life of Victor Hugo, the author of *Les Misérables*.
What role did he play in the society of the day?
- What challenges would have been faced in translating the story from the novel to a musical theatre production?
- Research other musical theatre productions which began their lives as a novel and have since been transformed into stage productions, either musicals or plays.
- Describe the properties of the entertainment mediums such as plays and musicals?
What makes them different from each other?
- What do you believe the major factors of difference in producing a musical from an original source such as a novel, as opposed to a newly created musical theatre work?
- Do you think it would be difficult to create a new musical? If so, describe the challenges you believe would be faced when creating one with and without source material from another medium?
- Identify what you believe are good stories or subject matter for the creation of new musicals?
(for example: historical events, personal stories of celebrities or sporting heroes, films, television series, existing books or novels)

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

JUST A CHILD WHO CANNOT KNOW THAT DANGER FOLLOWS WHERE I GO THERE ARE SHADOWS EVERYWHERE AND MEMORIES I CANNOT SHARE

Les Misérables began its life as a novel written in 1845, before being adapted into film versions in 1935 and 1978, a musical theatre libretto in 1980 and then a musical film in 2012. All four mediums depicted the time and place in history in which the story is set, however all tell the story through different means. After seeing the musical on stage, review the musical film.

QUESTIONS/ DISCUSSION IDEAS

- Explore processes of transferring a musical from the stage to the screen.
- How is the story told in the *Les Misérables* musical and how are the characters portrayed onstage? How is this different in the film?
- What challenges would be faced concerning the musical's setting and environment in translating the story from the stage to the screen?
- How effectively is this story translated from the stage musical the musical film?
- Were any elements of the story was lost during the transfer from stage to the film? If so, can you suggest how it could have been better incorporated?

ASSIGNMENTS/ RESEARCH AND WRITING PROJECTS

- What challenges would have been faced in translating the story of *Les Misérables* from a musical theatre production to the medium of film?
- What modifications, if any were made to the film score to better tell the *Les Misérables* story?
- In films, close-ups are used to create intimacy and wide-shots, landscape and space. How is this different to how the story is told in the stage musical?
- Research other films that began their lives as a novel, before being turned into a musical and have since been transformed into a musical film. How successful has this transition been artistically and commercially?
- Describe the properties of the entertainment mediums such as plays and musicals. Identify in what ways they are similar and how they are different.
- What do you believe the major factors of difference in producing a film from an original source such as a novel or a musical as opposed to a newly created screenplay?
- Do you think it would be difficult to create a new musical film? If so, describe the challenges you believe would be faced when creating one with and without source material from another medium?
- Identify what you believe are good stories or subject matter for the creation of musical films. (for example: historical events, personal stories of celebrities or sporting heroes, films, television series, existing books or novels)

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IN-DEPTH ASSIGNMENTS/RESEARCH AND WRITING PROJECTS

1. Hugo attempted to convince his audience that the poor and the outcast are worth saving. In our society, is this belief commonly held? Why or why not?
2. Explore the conditions under which most common people worked in Hugo's time (mid 1800's). What kinds of factory conditions were they forced to endure? How do they differ from conditions workers deal with today? Explore the influences of unions, child labor laws, or environmental protection laws.
3. Compare Victor Hugo and his work in *Les Misérables* with the work of one of these modern social crusaders: George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Miller, John Steinbeck.
4. When Valjean is released from prison he is given a yellow ticket of leave, effectively branding him a criminal to all he meets, making it impossible for him to lead a normal life again. How does our society treat people on parole, or ex-convicts? Are they able to lead normal lives again? Why or why not?
5. A great percentage of convicts released from prison end up back in jail soon after. Why is this, and what does it say about our “rehabilitation” system?
6. Do you believe we have an effective system of justice in America? Why/why not?
7. Discuss Hugo’s undying belief that man can become perfect. How does Jean Valjean’s life illustrate this belief?
8. Javert is a watchdog of the legal process. He applies the letter of the law to every lawbreaker, without exception. Should he have applied other standards to a man like Jean Valjean?
9. Today, many believe, like Javert, that no mercy should be shown to criminals. Do you agree with this? Why/why not?
10. What finally destroys Javert? Hugo says he is "an owl forced to gaze with an eagle." What does this mean?
11. Although they are on stage for only a brief time, both Fantine and Gavroche have vital roles to play in *Les Misérables* and a deep impact on the audience. What makes them such powerful characters? What do they have in common? Name some other characters from literature that appear for a short time, but have a lasting impact.
12. What was happening in the United States and England in 1815? In 1832?
13. Research the state of literacy in France in 1862, when *Les Misérables* was published. How much of the population read books? What kinds of people do you think bought *Les Misérables* when it was published? What current writer in America would you compare to Victor Hugo in his time? What recent book would you compare to *Les Misérables*?

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POST-SHOW DISCUSSION/ASSIGNMENTS

1. CONNECTIONS: EPIC AND PERSONAL

Misérables puts a personal face on epic issues. Valjean, Fantine, Cosette and many other characters represent ideas or situations in French society that Victor Hugo exposed through his book.

Justice, compassion, poverty and sacrifice are just some of the epic themes that run throughout *Les Misérables*.

- Ask your students to sit quietly, perhaps closing their eyes. Have each student privately select one of these four words.
- Ask them to think about this word and mention that huge, epic ideas are sometimes hard to grasp.
- Ask the students to try and find a personal connection in their life to that word/idea. Ask them to make the word personal.
- Now have them expand the word out to your hometown. How does that word relate?
- Ask them to return to their personal connection to the word.
- Now have them expand the word out to encompass our country. Where and how does that word relate or connect to our nation? Where doesn't it? Where does it need to?
- Ask them to return to their personal connection to the word. Now have them expand the word out to our world. Where and how does that word relate or connect to our planet? Where doesn't it? Where does it need to?
- Ask them to return to their personal connection to the word.
- Bring the reflection to a close. Discuss or write about the word if it seems necessary or appropriate.

2. COMPASSION

“To love another person is to see the face of God.” —Valjean, *Les Misérables*

“Why did I allow this man to touch my soul and teach me love?” —Valjean, *Les Misérables*

Near the beginning of *Les Misérables*, the main character, Jean Valjean, is released from prison and offered temporary shelter by the Bishop of Digne. However, Valjean's desperate situation, one that includes lack of food and resources, motivates him to steal silver from the Bishop's home. When the local authorities catch Valjean, something unexpected happens. The Bishop goes above and beyond what most human beings would do. He covers for Valjean and does not allow him to be taken to jail.

Valjean is deeply moved by the Bishop's action on his behalf. He does not take this moment for granted and “pays it forward” throughout his life, aligning his own choices with what was modeled for him in that fortunate moment.

- Has anyone ever shown you unexpected kindness? If so, describe what happened.
- Have you ever performed a selfless act like the one experienced by Valjean? Is committing an act of compassion easy or difficult? Why?
- Why might we resist being affected deeply by acts of compassion?
- Why are humans so hesitant to treat each other in this loving way on a regular basis? Or, does it happen often and is just not given proper attention?
- What role does fear play in our choices?

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- Why would one be afraid to act with compassion? What is there to be afraid of? Do you think offering kindness is an act of strength or an act of weakness? Why?
- Do you think it is possible, or realistic, to approach life in this way? Why?

3. JUSTICE

The Bishop's actions in *Les Misérables* demonstrate a deep understanding of Jean Valjean's situation. It seems that he considers everything about Valjean's predicament: his time spent in jail atoning for a past crime; his access to money, food and shelter; the consequences of sending Valjean back to jail at that particular moment. The Bishop comes to Valjean's rescue based on what seems fair and humane to him.

On the opposite end of the spectrum is the character of Javert, the inspector. Throughout the story he is a mission to pursue, capture and imprison Valjean. Javert cannot bring himself to show Valjean any kind of mercy, even when Valjean saves his life. In contrast to the Bishop, Javert's form of justice is blind to unique circumstances. He does not allow any rule to be bent or broken. Eventually, he realizes that this approach has its limits. The consequences of his rigidity become apparent to him, and this revelation is too much for him to bear.

- Has anyone ever taken action on your behalf that went above and beyond what a person is expected to do? How did this affect you?
- Why do you think the Bishop helped Jean Valjean, even after he stole the silver? What would have happened to Jean Valjean if the Bishop did not show him mercy?
- Would you be able to forgive someone of a petty crime? A serious crime? Would you expect to be forgiven for stealing something? Why or why not?
- Do you know of a situation where a crime was committed, but the punishment did not fit the situation?
- How can we ensure that the punishment fits the crime?
- How do you/we decide what is fair and equitable?
- How do we decide what is just? in school? at home? in our city? in our country? in our world?
- Name some rules or laws in the above-mentioned locales.
- What role do rules play in our choices? Do you feel the need to follow them, rebel against them, or to look at the unique aspects of each situation before making a decision based on them?

4. SACRIFICE

"Let him be, let him live.

If I die, let me die,

let him live, bring him home." —Valjean singing over a sleeping Marius in *Les Misérables*

The lyrics quoted above are from a tender ballad that captures the depth of emotion an adult can have for a child. In the song, "Bring Him Home," Jean Valjean is saying to God it would be preferable for him to die and to allow young Marius to live.

"The little people must be sacred to the big ones, and it is from the rights of the weak that the duty of the strong is comprised." —Victor Hugo

Time and again, Valjean finds himself in the position of coming to the aid of a young person at great cost to his own safety. Whether he is rushing to the side of Fantine's daughter, Cosette, or saving the

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life of Marius, a young revolutionary who is like a son to him, Valjean makes continuous sacrifices to protect these young people.

- Why does one make sacrifices?
- What would be difficult for you to give up? Easy to give up? Impossible to give up?
- What happens when one is not willing to make sacrifices?
- One often hears of parents and guardians making sacrifices for their children. These offerings come in the form of time, energy and even their lives. Is this easy or difficult for you to imagine doing that? Why?
- What would you sacrifice for your child?
- What has been sacrificed for you?
- Is there a cause, or a person, that you would sacrifice your life for?

5. YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION

Revolution [rev-uh-loo-shuh n]:

1. an overthrow or repudiation and the thorough replacement of an established government or political system by the people governed.
2. a sudden, complete or marked change in something.
3. a procedure or course, as if in a circuit, back to a starting point. — a turning round or rotating, as on an axis.
4. a round or cycle of events in time or a recurring period of time. (*source: dictionary.com*)

Les Misérables occurs after the French Revolution, but before France had completed its transformation into a Republic. The setting is a failed student uprising in 1832.

As we speak, revolutions, and attempts at revolution, are occurring around the globe.

- Where are they happening? Find the locations on a map.
- Why do you believe these revolutions are happening?
- Who is fighting?
- What are they fighting for?
- Is nonviolent revolution possible? Why or why not?

Revolution can mean a huge change. Revolution can mean a return the beginning. Revolution can mean the completion of a cycle.

- What does the word “revolution” mean to you?
- Where would you like to see revolution take place? Globally? Locally? Internally?
- Find the Beatles song "Revolution" and share it with the class. Does it fit this book, the discussion of revolution as it relates to this play?



OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. PAY IT FORWARD

Throughout *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean is confronted with extremely challenging life choices. After much soul searching, he consistently chooses to take the high road.

Students will conduct an exploration of the consequences of choice. In this storytelling exercise, students are to create a situation where a character must make one of two choices. The students will explore the consequences of both choices by creating two different stories. This exercise mirrors challenges experienced by Valjean throughout *Les Misérables*. One version will result from the loving or compassionate choice. One version will result from the less compassionate choice, whether it is based in fear, selfishness, anger, hurt, detachment, etc.

Instructions:

Students are divided into small groups of 3-5.

Each group is to create a situation where a character has to make one of two choices. Students thoroughly discuss the ramifications of each decision. Eventually, two different stories will emerge from this situation, one based on a loving choice, the other based on a less compassionate choice.

Ideas for the stories may come from *Les Misérables*; for example, students may dramatize one of Valjean's situations. One story is created from the choice he makes in the play to take care of Fantine's daughter. An alternative story is created from choosing not to take care of her.

An English class might choose to dramatize a choice made in a novel they are studying. For example, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Atticus Finch makes the unpopular decision to defend Tom Robinson. How might the story have unfolded if Atticus had refused to defend him?

The students can invent a situation, perhaps based on real life experiences. A friend is being bullied at school. What are the consequences of becoming involved in the situation? What are the consequences of walking away?

The stories are to be communicated in tableau (frozen picture) form.

Each story is made up of three tableaux: beginning, middle and end. Each group will present all six tableaux/two stories.

Class discussion takes place regarding the tableaux:

Do you think one version is more realistic than the other? Why? Was one choice easier to make than the other? Why?

Which story did you enjoy the most? Why?

Did you feel compelled to create a negative story about the positive choice? Or vice versa?

Were any sacrifices made in making either one of the choices? What were they?

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2. “YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION. WE ALL WANT TO CHANGE THE WORLD.”

Many of the songs in *Les Misérables* are about revolution. And they are Big. Loud. Passionate. The Beatles wrote a song called “Revolution.” It is also big, loud and passionate. Do you know the lyrics? What were they singing about?

Other songs of revolution you may be familiar with:

“Get up, Stand up” by Bob Marley and the Wailers

“The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” by Gil Scott-Heron

“Talkin’ Bout a Revolution” by Tracy Chapman

“She’s a Rebel” by Green Day

Writing prompt:

What is a song of revolution in your life? What is it about? What does it make you feel? What does it make you think? What are some of the lyrics?

Activity:

Students form groups of five. Each group member shares his or her writing prompt.

The group chooses one song to dramatize. All group members research and discuss the song’s origin and meaning.

Make a choice about how to present the song.

- Stage the song as if it were a huge show stopping number. Everyone learns the song: lyrics, melody and harmony. Add blocking and choreography. Make it dramatic, like the songs from *Les Misérables*.
- Treat the song like a monologue or a dramatic scene and speak the lyrics. Work on subtext. Add emotion. Create the details of a story behind the song.
- If desired, create a scene to be inserted before, during, and/or after the song. Get specific with setting and characters.

Perform the songs for your fellow classmates. Time permitting, have groups rehearse and perform their number *and* a piece from *Les Misérables*. Have students compare and contrast the two songs and make connections between their songs of revolution and the music from *Les Misérables*.

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3. “REHEARSING CHANGE”

The opening of *Les Misérables* depicts prisoners working under the watchful eye of brutal wardens. In the opening lyrics of the musical, the prisoners sing of their plight:

“Look down, look down
Don’t look ‘em in the eye
Look down, look down
You’re here until you die.”

This first moment in the play viscerally depicts the oppressive conditions many characters in the story are living under. Its heaviness also communicates their despair and unhappiness with these conditions and their desire for change.

Oppression: What does the word “oppression” mean to you?

Students and teacher discuss what oppresses them. (This exercise may also start with a writing prompt, so students can formulate their thoughts in a more concrete and private way.) They define the word “oppression” together. Are the sources of their oppression external (parent, teacher, boss, society, peer group, etc.) or internal (negative self-talk, fear, doubt, lack of knowledge, etc.)? Is change desired in these areas? How might that change come about?

Instructions:

Students are divided into small groups of 3-5. Each group member shares one situation where they are oppressed and feel a need for change in their lives.

The group chooses one story to dramatize. Specific details of the scene are created: who, what, where and why.

The scene should be structured so that a protagonist is experiencing conflict with the source of his/her oppression and attempting to work through it. (for example: A student has a difficult relationship with a teacher. The student feels that he is being treated unfairly by the educator and wants to address the issue. The scene is about a conversation the student has with the teacher, based on a real-life interaction.)

The group rehearses this scene and eventually presents it to the class. The classmates watch the scene one time through, uninterrupted.

After observing the scene, students and teacher discuss varying solutions to the problem the protagonist is facing.

The group performs the scene again. This time, audience members are allowed to insert solutions to the problem.

If a person wants to offer an alternative approach to the conflict: She calls out “freeze.” She steps into the scene and replaces the protagonist. She acts out her solution to the problem.

The scene continues.

If another audience member wants to try a different solution, the process is repeated: He calls out, “freeze!” He steps into the scene and replaces the protagonist.

The scene ends at the teacher’s discretion. Discussion ensues about what the students observed and experienced.

The above is based on an exercise created by Augusto Boal, founder of Theatre of the Oppressed. It was presented in a Master Class at the 2010 California Educational Theater Association conference. The course was conducted by Brent Blair, director of the M.A. program in Applied Theatre Arts at the university of Southern California, and was entitled, “Ensemble Building and Theatre Making Techniques Inspired by Theatre of the Oppressed.”

COMPREHENSION QUIZ

1. Why has Jean Valjean spent 19 years in prison?
2. Valjean steals from the only man who has ever helped him. What does this priest do when the police bring Valjean to him?
3. Who is "taking care" of Fantine's child?
4. List the steps in Fantine's degradation.
5. Why does Valjean turn himself in after so many years of freedom?
6. Who is Marius?
7. Why do the students want Javert executed?
8. Why does Éponine foil her father's plot to rob Valjean?
9. How does Valjean save Marius' life?
10. Why does Marius reject Valjean?

Answers to Quiz

1. He stole a loaf of bread - then tried to escape several times.
2. The priest covers for him - says he forgot the candlesticks - the best thing.
3. the Thénardiens
4. a. She has an illegitimate child that she is paying the Thenardiens to keep for her. b. She loses her job at the factory because she objects to the advances of the foreman, and the other women do not support her, possibly because they are jealous. c. She sells her locket, then her hair, then becomes a prostitute.
5. Another man has been arrested in his place, and he will not let another man go to prison for him.
6. Marius is a student who is involved in the revolution and who has fallen in love with Cosette.
7. He has been spying on them for the government.
8. She is in love with Marius and knows he loves the young woman who lives in that house.
9. He carries him to safety through the sewers of Paris - even at the risk of his own safety.
10. He doesn't realize that Valjean is the one who saved his life.

Les Misérables



ONE
DAY
MORE



James Fisher

even the

DARKEST

Night

will END

& THE SUN will

RISE

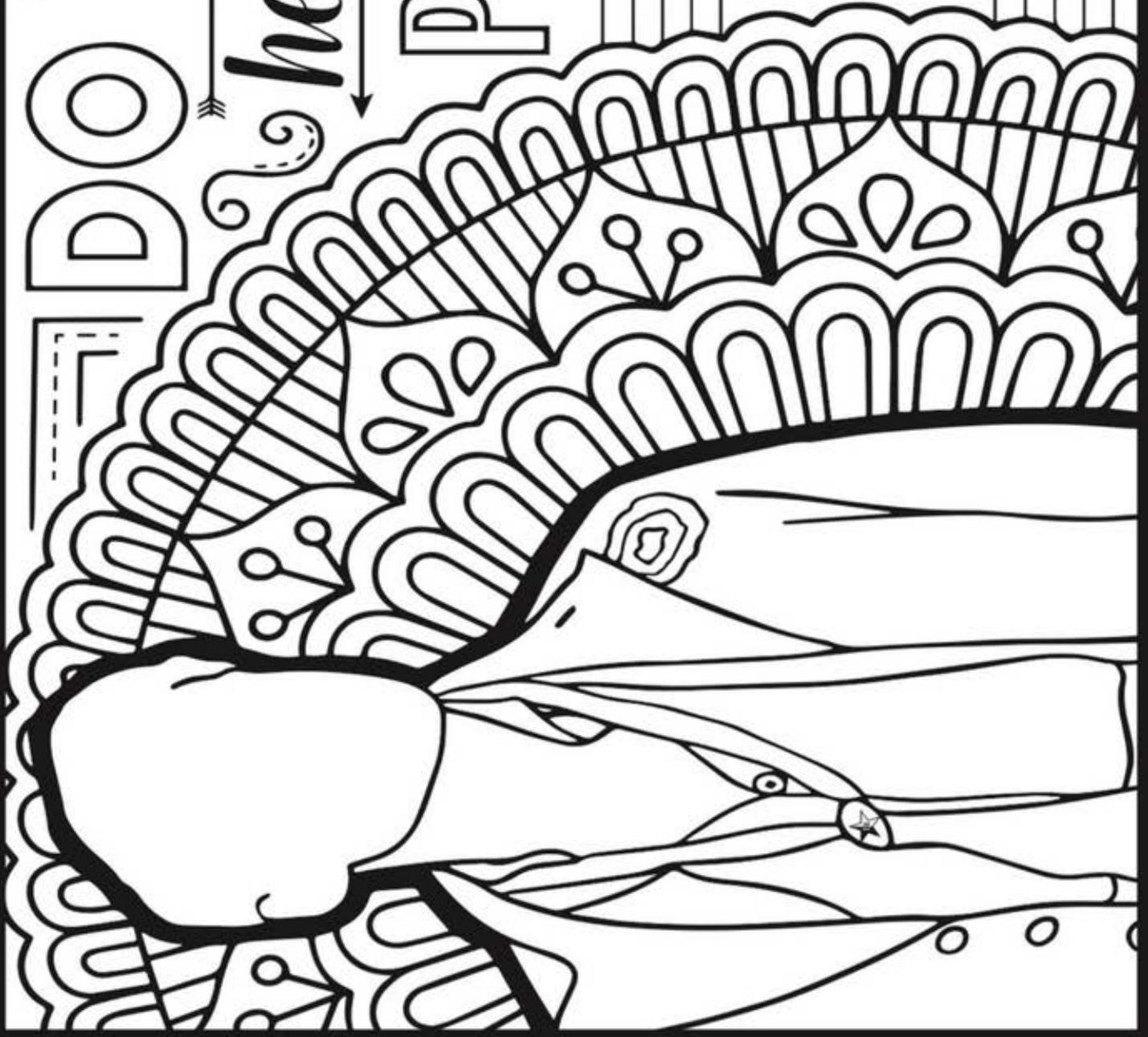
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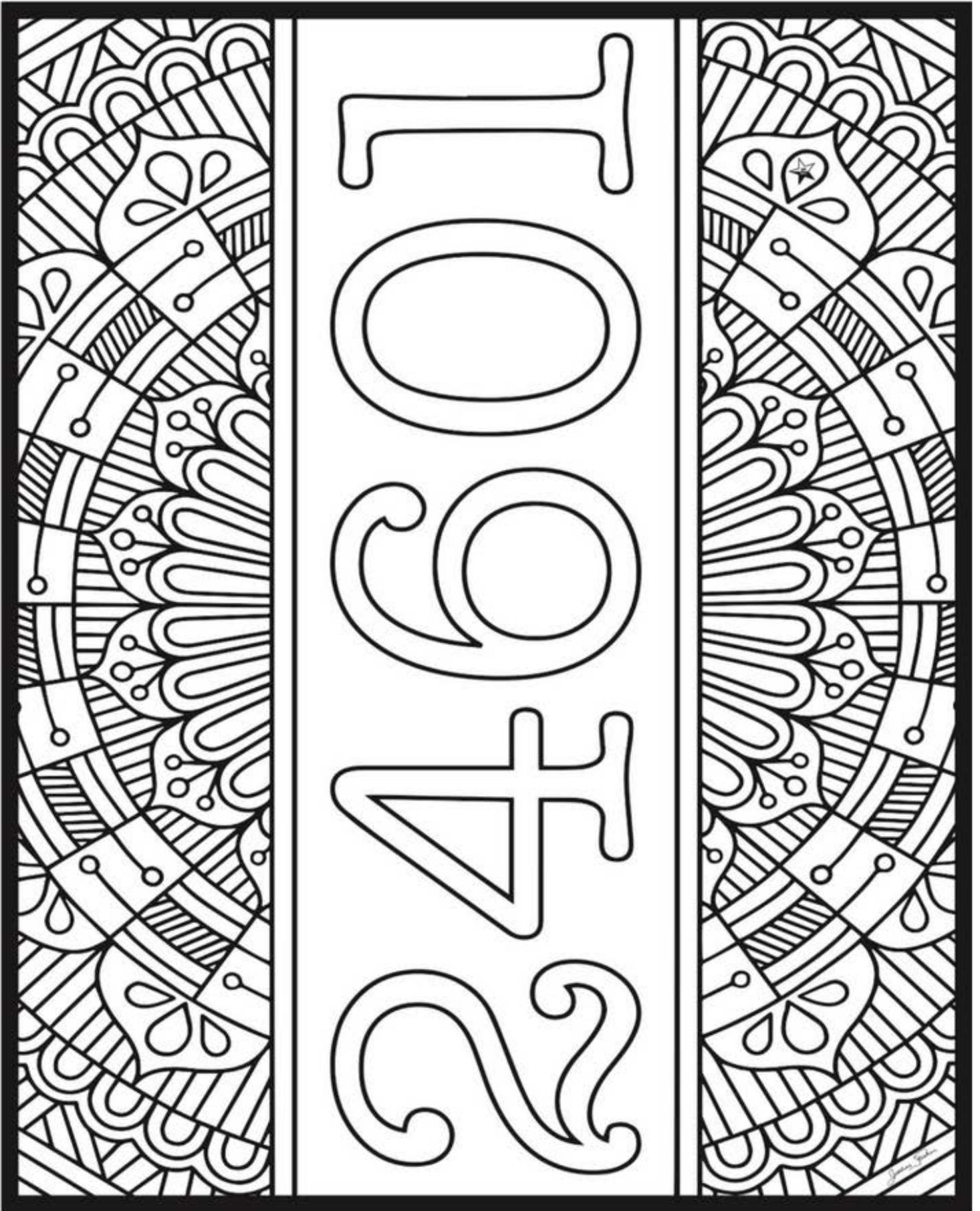
hear the

PEOPLE



Sing!





SAFE

