



Westminster Christian Academy

Honors Literature of Western Civilization Summer Reading Assignment 2026 Heidi Thies

Read *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas.

- (ISBN-13:978-0140449266 for the highly recommended 1,200-page version for voracious readers
- OR ISBN-13:978-0553213508 for the abridged version by Bantam Classics, 500 pages and perfectly acceptable).
- **PLEASE DO NOT PURCHASE/READ THE DOVER THRIFT EDITION; IT LEAVES OUT KEY DETAILS OF THE PLOT!**

Since this is a work of literature in translation, please only read one of these two editions so that we are able to work together from a shared text.

Dumas's adventurous novel, inspired by a real-life case of wrongful imprisonment, explores deep human issues of love, suffering, and contentment and thorny moral questions about revenge, justice, and forgiveness.

Also, annotate for and consider these ideas while reading to prepare for class discussion and writing assignments:

1. **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HUMAN?:** Consider key attributes of humanity as you read the novel and annotate for them. We will explore this essential question throughout the year.
2. **REVENGE PLOTS:** How instrumental are the four men in Edmond's downfall? How does he carry out his revenge? Is his revenge balanced according to their guilt? Does he take it too far?
3. **CHANGE:** What influences how characters develop/change throughout the novel?
4. **CONTEXT:** How do the historical context and the worldview/values of the time period affect the story?
5. **CONFLICT:** What are the major turning points of the plot, and what drives them?

There will also be an objective test as well as an in-class essay over the novel in the first few weeks of school. I recommend not watching a movie/show version until after taking the test, since the films/shows are significantly different from the book in some essential plot points.