

Teacher's notes

The Count of Monte Cristo

by Alexandre Dumas



SUMMARY

When the novel opens, Edmond Dantes is on the verge of adult life. He has everything to look forward to – a new job, as captain of his own ship, a beautiful fiancée, Mercedes, who he is shortly to marry. But he has enemies who envy him his new job and his wife-to-be. And he has been foolish. At the dying request of the previous captain of his merchant ship, *The Pharoah*, he has carried a letter to the exiled Napoleon on the island of Elba, who has, in turn, given him a letter addressed to someone in Paris.

When Edmond's enemies denounce him to the local judge as a traitor, it seems at first that Edmond will escape with a reprimand. But the judge, Villefort, recognises the name on the letter as his brother, and is terrified that he will be linked with plots against the newly-restored monarch. He sends Edmond to the infamous Chateau D'If prison, where men go and never return.

The first months in Chateau D'If are terrible for Edmond. But finally he makes contact with another prisoner, Faria, who has made a secret pathway under the prison. They meet regularly and pass along the pathway between each other's cells. Faria teaches Edmond about many things, including history and the English language. He also tells him about the Spada treasure on the island of Monte Cristo.

When Faria finally dies, Edmond sees his chance. He changes places with the dead Faria and is carried out of the prison. He is thrown into the sea, but manages to survive and is rescued by a smuggling ship.

He finally makes it to Monte Cristo and finds the treasure. He returns to Marseilles a rich man, to find Mercedes at the home of his dying father. The novel ends happily, with Edmond and Mercedes sailing out of the harbour on his new boat.

ABOUT ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870) is probably the most widely read of all French writers, best known perhaps

for *The Three Musketeers* with this story, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, a close second. Astonishingly, these two world famous books were both written in the same year, 1844, and translated into English two years later. Dumas was born in France but his grandfather was a French nobleman who had emigrated to Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic) where he had married a black woman. As a child he loved adventure stories and this love came through later in his own writing.

He first became famous in literary circles with his play *Henry III and His Court* which was first performed in 1829 to acclaim. He went on to write over 1200 books, although it must be said that many of these were the result of his writing factory, where writing apprentices worked to flesh out his ideas. Nevertheless, nearly all are clearly the result of his imagination and sense of storyline.

Dumas made a huge amount of money during his life but spent it all, on a country estate which he called Monte Cristo, on mistresses and on less successful businesses than writing.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

Dumas grew up in France at the time of Napoleon's rise to pre-eminence in Europe. In the year of Dumas' birth, Napoleon was made consul – or ruler – for life. When Dumas was 8, the French Empire reached its furthest extent, following successes at the battles of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland and many other places. By the age of 10, Dumas must have read of Napoleon's triumphant march into Russia and his victory at the Battle of Borodino. But shortly after that, came the disastrous retreat from Moscow and the swift massing of his enemies which led to his abdication and exile to Elba in 1814. Napoleon was to have one final fling, however. He was still immensely popular in France and when he escaped from Elba in 1815, he reconquered the country in a matter of days. But his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo just 100 days after his return led to permanent exile on the remote island of St Helena where he died in 1821.

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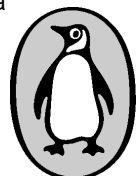
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PRE-
ELEMENTARY

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO



Teacher's notes

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/group work activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Ask students to work in pairs. Tell them that the pictures in the book all show the hero. Ask them to work out the story from the pictures. Then get pairs to tell their ideas and ask the class to choose the most likely storyline.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1–5

- 1 Remind students of the line in this section 'On a ship, the last request of an officer is an order.' Ask them what the last request of Edmond's captain was – to take a secret letter – and remind them that taking the letter was against the law. Then put students into small groups to discuss the question: Is it right to break the law if you are obeying an order?
- 2 Put students in pairs to role play a conversation between Mercedes and Villefort in which she asks about Edmond and Villefort tries to explain what has happened to him – without telling the truth, of course.

Chapters 6–10

- 1 Put students into groups of four or five to reconstruct the letter from the illustration on page 22. They must not look at page 25 whilst they do this exercise.
- 2 In the same groups, students memorise the letter as Edmond has to do. They can choose how to memorise but they must be able to repeat it without looking at any notes. Test each group and see which is the best.

Chapter 11–15

- 1 Put students in pairs to role play the scene where Jacopo wants to stay with Edmond, and Edmond wants him to go so he can look for the treasure. Edmond must think of many reasons why Jacopo must go and Jacopo must think of many reasons to stay.
- 2 Ask students to work in small groups to think of better titles for each of the chapters in this section. Groups then give their titles for each chapter and the whole class decides which is best in each case.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into pairs to role play a conversation between Edmond and Mercedes, in which she asks him lots of questions and he explains everything which happened to him.

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapters 1–5

- on board** (adv) on a ship, plane or train
captain (n) someone who is in charge of a ship or plane
courtyard (n) an open space surrounded by walls or buildings
God (n) the being who Christians, Jews, Muslims pray to
goods (n) things that are produced in order to be sold
governor (n) the person in charge of an organization or place
lamp (n) a thing that produces lights by using electricity, gas or oil
power (n) control over people or events
ruler (n) someone such as a king who has official power over a country
shore (n) the land along the edge of a large area of water
treasure (n) a collection of gold, silver, jewels etc. especially one that has been hidden

Chapters 6–10

- bar** (n) a long piece of metal or wood
grave (n) the place where a dead body is buried
liquid (n) a substance such as water that flows and is not solid or gas
prayer (n) words that you say to God

Chapter 11–16

- axe** (n) a tool used for cutting wood with a wooden handle and a metal blade
chest (n) a large strong box with a lid, that you use to keep things in
coin (n) a piece of money made of metal
customs (n) the place where visitors to a country are checked for illegal goods when you go into a country
country (n) an area of land that has its own government, leader, army, etc.
mark (n) a sign or shape that is written or printed



Student's activities

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Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only exercises are marked.

The Count of Monte Cristo



Activities before reading the book

- Read the first part of the Introduction. Why is Edmond Dantes sent to Chateau D'If?
- Work in pairs.
Student A: Read about Napoleon.
Student B: Read about Cesare Borgia.
Ask and answer questions about the two men.
- Read about the writer of the book. How much can you remember about his life? Test each other in pairs.

Activities while reading the book

Chapters 1–5

- Match each of these things and people (a–g) from Chapter 1 with one of the descriptions (i–vii).
 - The Pharoah
 - Danglars
 - Captain Leclerc
 - Marseilles
 - Elba
 - Mercedes
 - Monte Cnsto
 - a city in southern France
 - an island
 - One of the ships of Morrel and Son
 - the Captain of The Pharoah who died
 - the First Officer then Captain of The Pharoah
 - the girl that Dantes is going to marry
 - The island where Napoleon is living
- Who, in Chapter 2, said ...?
 - My boy, my son.
 - I have some sad news.
 - You are rich now.
 - If you want money, we will lend it to you.
 - Are you hoping to be the next captain of The Pharoah?
 - My opinion of women is better than yours.
 - He isn't captain yet. We can stop him.
- Match the questions (a–g) and answers (i–vii) about the information in Chapter 3.
 - Where did Edmond meet Mercedes?
 - What were Caderousse and Danglars doing at La Reserve.
 - Why was Edmond in a hurry?
 - How did Danglars kill Edmond with a pen?
 - Who was Villefort?
 - Where did Edmond, Mercedes and their guests eat before the wedding?
 - Why didn't Edmond and Mercedes go to the church?
 - At La Reserve.
 - Because an officer and four soldiers took him away.
 - Drinking.
 - At her house.
 - He had to go to Paris.
 - He was an officer of the government.

- He wrote to an officer of the government about the letter Edmond was carrying.
- Read these sentences from Chapter 4. Some of them are not true. Which ones?
 - My name is Edmond Dantes.
 - I am an officer on The Pharoah, one of Morrel's ships.
 - No, I don't know the writing.
 - On a ship, the last request of an officer is an order.
 - I gave the letter to Marshall Bertrand and he gave me a letter to take to a person in Paris.
 - I don't know men who want to destroy (the king).
 - I didn't show (the letter) to anyone.
 - I will try to make your stay as short as possible
 - Answer these questions about the information in Chapter 5.
 - Where did the boat take Edmond to?
 - Why did they take him there?
 - What did Edmond have to eat the first night?
 - What did he want to do the next day?
 - Where did the soldiers take Edmond to?

Chapters 6–10

- Complete these sentences from Chapter 6 with a suitable adjective or adverb in each space.
 - 'Is the food ... ?' asked the chief officer of prisons.
 - 'The food is very'they all replied,
 - 'We always hear the ... thing.'said the chief officer. 'I have done nothing I want to be ...'
 - 'This is an ... officer,' thought Edmond.
 - 'The officer thinks I am ...'
 - He tried to make his voice quiet and
 - 'Mr Villefort was very ... to me.' he told the officer.
 - In the prison book, it said that Edmond was a ... man.
- Complete each sentence about the information in Chapter 7 with a suitable word from the box.

islands pathway pot prison prisoner room sea soldier sound tool voice wall wood

 - One evening, Edmond heard a ... in the wall.
 - He looked around the room for a sharp ...
 - He broke the water ... on the floor.
 - The stone ... was soft.
 - He made a deep hole and then came to a great piece of
 - He heard the ... of a man.
 - It was Faria, another ...
 - Faria's plan was to break through the wall of the ...
 - throw himself into the ...
 - and swim to one of the ...
 - One day, Faria dimbed into Edmond's ...
 - He saw from Edmond's window that there was a ... outside his room.

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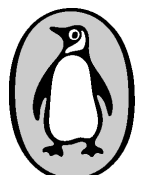
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PRE-ELEMENTARY

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO



Student's activities

- (j) It was not possible to escape because a ... guarded it day and night.
- 3 There is one word wrong in each of these sentences about the information in Chapter 8. Find the word and correct it.
- The two friends passed easily along the underground street.
 - Faria made an oil light for himself.
 - Edmond said 'A clever person doesn't want to talk to a person who knows everything.'
 - Faria learnt about the history of the world and the English language and many other things.
 - One day, Faria cried out in pain and Edmond saw deep green circles under his eyes.
 - Faria had some liquid for his illness in a hole in the foot of his chair.
 - Edmond gave Faria a lot of the liquid and, at last, some colour came into his face.
 - Edmond went back to his own room when he heard the stairs of the guard.
 - Faria couldn't move his right arm or leg and there was a pain in his neck.
- 4 Are these sentences from the story of the treasure (Chapter 9) true or false?
- Faria was Prince Spada's son.
 - Prince Spada was very rich.
 - Cesare Borgia killed Prince Spada.
 - He put poison in his wine glass.
 - Spada knew there was poison in the glass.
 - Spada wrote a note, explaining where the treasure was.
 - He put the note in the family prayer book.
 - Cesare Borgia took the prayer book after Spada's death.
 - Faria found the letter in the prayer book after Prince Spada's death.
 - He tore it in half.
 - He found the other half of the paper.
- 5 After you have read Chapter 10, work in pairs. Answer these questions.
- How can Edmond escape now?
 - What are the dangers for him in this method of escape?
- When you have discussed these questions, read Chapter 11.

Chapter 11–15

- 1 After you have read Chapter 11, work in the same pairs as for Exercise 5 above. Answer these questions.
- Did you get the method of escape right?
 - Did you get the dangers right?
- 2 Put these events from Chapter 12 in order.
- Edmond bought some new clothes.
 - Edmond cut open the bag.
 - Edmond cut the stone free.
 - Edmond had a shave and a hair cut.
 - Edmond saw a small ship.
 - Edmond swam out to sea.
 - Edmond went to a meeting of ships' captains.
 - The men pulled Edmond onto the ship.
 - The ship passed the island of Monte Cristo.
 - The ship reached Livorno.
 - The ship sailed towards Corsica.

- The ship went back from Corsica to Livorno.
 - The ships' captains decided to sail to Monte Cristo to meet a ship from Turkey.
- 3 Match the questions (a–g) and answers (i–vii) about the information in Chapter 13.
- What did Edmond want to do on the island?
 - When did he go to look for the treasure?
 - What did he see on the stones?
 - Why didn't he move the rock after the 21st stone?
 - What did the men see as Edmond was coming back to them?
 - Why did they leave him on the island?
 - How long did they say they would be away for?
 - Because they thought his leg was broken.
 - It was too big.
 - Marks.
 - More than a week.
 - They saw him fall.
 - To find Spada's treasure.
 - While the men rested.
- 4 Complete these sentences from Chapter 14 with the correct preposition in each space. You can use the same preposition more than once.
- Edmond climbed carefully ... from the rocks.
 - He followed the line of marks ... the stones again.
 - They started ... a small place on the shore.
 - They ended ... a large round rock.
 - 'Prince Spada didn't lift this rock ... this place — it fell here.'
 - Edmond cut away the small stones ... the top.
 - He put one end of a piece of wood ... the hole —
 - and pulled ... the other.
 - The rock fell ... the hill into the sea.
 - Edmond saw a large stone ... a ring in the centre of it.
 - He lifted the stone and saw steps going ... into an underground room.
 - He broke the wall to the second room ... his axe.
 - He pulled the stones ... the wall, one by one.
 - There was a dark corner ... the left of the opening.
 - He found a chest with a piece of silver ... the wood.
 - There was the mark ... the Spada family on the silver.
 - He open the chest and found coins ... many different countries —
 - bars ... gold and gold rings.
- 5 Work with a partner. Discuss the answers to these questions about the information in the last chapter.
- How did Edmond hide the treasure place?
 - How did the Young Amelia escape from the government ship?
 - How did Edmond get money for his presents to the men?
 - How did he get back to Monte Cristo?
 - How did he hide the treasure from the Customs officers in Marseilles?
 - How did he meet Mercedes again?
 - How did he leave Marseilles?

Activities after reading the book

How much can you remember of the Faria letter from Cesare Borgia? Work in small groups to try to rewrite the letter.

