



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1987 Volume II: Epic, Romance and the American Dream

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## Les Misérables

Curriculum Unit 87.02.10  
by Ruth Iosue

Although Victor Marie Hugo's *Les Misérables* is now considered a scholarly classic, it began as a popular romance novel. When it first appeared in 1862, long lines outside bookstores in France and Belgium heralded the public success of this epic novel in four volumes, a novel that brought its author unrivaled renown. In September 1862 he was honored at a banquet, the first of its kind, at which over over 2,000 authors, scientists, and statesmen praised him and his work. The novel was published in over forty countries in its first ten years and became the subject of six stage and film productions, most recently the Tony Award-winning musical. At least part of the novel's success is due to its humanitarian themes and part also to affection for Hugo, whose open protest of Emperor Napoleon III had exiled him to the English Channel island of Guernsey, where he completed it. But its success is due also to the engaging adventures of the saintly convict, Jean Valjean. Unfortunately, Jean Valjean has become a well-known but seldom-read character, *Les Misérables*, mere plot. This curriculum unit seeks to unravel some of the novel's complexities and present it in a light teachers and students will find thought-provoking and engaging.

Both students and the elite literary world world criticize *Les Misérables* for the same things: its long, rambling digressions; sentimentality; and too-frequent use of coincidence. In his biography, *Victor Hugo: A Tumultuous Life*, Samuel Edwards notes, It would be gross understatement to say that Hugo exaggerated. He was incapable of reporting anything, trivial or important, in factual terms, and described any and every event in his own grandiose manner." <sup>1</sup> Eugene Ionesco attacks Hugo and his work as insincere, posed and cliched and states that he "never took the trouble to think." <sup>2</sup> He explains Hugo's popularity by characterizing readers as the "semieducated amorphous mass that constitute[s] the romantic public." <sup>3</sup>

But among this amorphous mass of admirers are some noted figures. Early on, Chateaubriand praised Hugo's work. Tolstoy saw him "towering over his century as a model of the highest moral and artistic consciousness." <sup>4</sup> According to Sartre, he was "a man endowed with almost superhuman power" <sup>5</sup> and Dostoevsky even compared him to Homer as a voice of "spiritual regeneration." <sup>6</sup> Indeed even Hugo himself noted his own grandeur. His son Charles brought these words from his exiled father:

I find it consolation that I am regarded as more than a writer of verse by my fellow countrymen. To them I am a national institution embodying in my one person all the best that is France. <sup>7</sup>

"Ego Hugo," the motto he wrote for his own family crest is not one of his exaggerations.

Perhaps, however, Hugo's influence and prolific career justify his enormous ego. He was a philosopher and statesman, as well as dramatist, poet, novelist, essayist, and pencil sketch artist. He began reading and writing at the age of five and wrote poetry in his childhood; in fact, at fourteen he had already written twenty-three poems. He became known for striking out in new directions, and his play *Cromwell* (1827) included a preface that attacked French dramatic theory and praised Shakespeare. He followed *Hernani* (1830), praised for its romanticism, with the plays *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), *Mary Tudor* (1833), *Buy Blas* (1838), and *The Burgraves* (1843). His poetry collections illustrate his developing philosophy: *Autumn Leaves* (1831), *Twilight Songs* (1835), *Light and Shadow* (1840), and *Legend of the Centuries* (1859). His prose includes *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* (1829) which attacks capital punishment, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831), *Les Misérables* (1862), *Toilers of the Sea* (1866) which uses extensively the water metaphor of *Les Misérables*, *The Man Who Laughs* (1869), *Ninety-Three* (1874), as well as many other works.

*Les Misérables* comprises ideas Hugo found impressive. Preoccupied with the condemned man, he visited prisoners just prior to execution, and from this study emerged the convict Jean Valjean. He wanted to show that the executioner should not order society, and thus he created Inspector Javert, who dutifully and unquestioningly delivers men to the galleys. He was impressed with a report that a bishop in the Midi aided a convict in 1835, and he based his theme of religion superseding and transcending societal laws on this report.

<sup>8</sup> Also included are his early political themes: opposition to the death penalty and poor prison conditions and the need for improving the quality of women and children's lives. Tragedies in his family, mental illness and premature death, increased his interest in religion, especially mysticism and the occult, and in "Philosophie. Commencement d'une livre," originally intended as the novel's preface, he states that he originally wanted it to be a religious book. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, with its wide range of themes, *Les Misérables* is a social, historical, as well as religious book.

*Les Misérables* is set during one of the most tempestuous times in history, the period of the French Revolution and beyond. Causes for the revolution are many and complex, but quite simply, revolution was born of dissatisfaction with social injustices of the day. While the ruling class lived in extreme opulence, the peasants starved. In addition there had arisen a merchant class, the bourgeoisie, who despite growing wealth and position, were forced to endure injustices the ruling class placed upon them. Revolution began when on July 14, 1789, the people of Paris stormed the Bastille and freed its political prisoners. Thus began a bloody time during which royalty and revolutionaries were guillotined. With the reign of Louis XVI came the Reign of Terror, when anyone who aroused the least suspicion to the new government was executed. During this period France was threatened from both within and without, giving Napoleon Bonaparte the opportunity to gain recognition on the battlefield. In 1795 a group of moderates gained power, ending the revolution and forming a constitution, which lasted only until Napoleon returned from Egypt proclaiming himself emperor. Napoleon I ruled from 1804-14, after which the Bourbons regained power under the rule of Louis XVIII, who ruled from 1814-15. Napoleon returned from his exile in the Elba to rule for the Hundred Days in 1815. He was again ousted, however, by Louis XVIII, whose reign ended in 1824 with the succession of his brother Charles X. Charles X tried to restore absolutism to France, and revolution ended his reign in 1830. The revolutionists placed in power Louis-Philippe, a member of the House of Orleans, to replace the House of Bourbons. They hoped that Louis-Philippe would be a king of the people, but Louis-Philippe's interests did not rest with the people, who exiled him in 1848. The nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon was elected president but proclaimed himself emperor Napoleon III in 1851. He remained in power until the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The Third Republic was established in 1871.

Victor Hugo's life spanned the period from Napoleon's reign as First Consul to the Third Republic, and *Les Misérables* is his attempt to explain the violent fluctuations between control by royalty and by the people,

revolution and restoration. Though perhaps overly sentimental or exaggerated, it is based on his reading of things as they were. His interpretation of history is based on the personal, political, and religious, and it was through the weaving and unravelling of these threads that he saw meaning. He saw that God was not above the people in a clean, pure heaven, nor was he in the golden royalty of the tyrannical leaders. God was in the mire of the Parisian sewers and the poverty of Gavroche, the pitiful street urchin. Through its interwoven personal, political, and religious motifs, *Les Misérables* illustrates Victor Hugo's philosophy that salvation comes from below.

Hugo's personal and political life influenced his philosophy. His father Léopold was a general in one of Napoleon Bonaparte's armies. His mother Sophie was a royalist. Soon after the birth of her three sons, Sophie abandoned them for Paris and General Lahorie. Catherine Thomas, the nurse Léopold hired to care for the boys, soon became his mistress. Sophie sent for her children only after Napoleon sent out word that moral standards were to be stiffened, probably due to his discovery of Josephine's unfaithfulness.<sup>10</sup> In Paris Hugo's upbringing was poor but well-influenced. As mistress of General Lahorie, Sophie came in contact with prominent people of the day. General Lahorie first encouraged Victor's brother Abel to write poetry, and Abel's pursuit encouraged Victor.

Throughout his life Hugo would experience the tension between innocence and "romantic conquest" brought on by his parents' affairs and battles over the children and his own relationship with Adèle Foucher, a childhood friend, whom he married in 1822 after obtaining money from his first book of published poems.<sup>11</sup> Like his parents' marriage, his was not to last long. Although he was to have many affairs throughout his married life, his fifty-year relationship with Juliette Drouet, accepted by all of France, weathered them all. His innocence/romance conflict appears in Valjean's ambiguous relationship with Fantine and later Cosette, whom he reluctantly gives to Marius.

Hugo's political career, inspired by his belief that a poet must fulfill his obligation as a leader,<sup>12</sup> led to his nineteen-year exile from France, an exile that finds its parallel in Valjean's nineteen-year imprisonment for stealing a loaf of bread. Seeing that Hugo had influence, Louis-Philippe secured him a seat in the French legislative body. From this point his work became increasingly political. He supported Louis-Napoleon for president in 1848, but when the ruler declared himself emperor, Hugo began to attack Napoleon III openly. He was forced to flee to Brussels, where he wrote *History of Crime* and *Napoleon the Insignificant* to protest Napoleon III. In Paris his two sons were imprisoned. In 1852 the impact of his criticism forced him to the English Channel island of Jersey, where he wrote *Punishment*, a long poetic attack on Napoleon III. When the English asked him to leave Jersey in 1855, he moved to Guernsey. During this time, his works were very popular in Paris, and realizing that Hugo's support could reaffirm his political stability, Napoleon III invited him back. But he refused to return to the Paris he loved in protest of Napoleon's social injustices. He instead remained in exile and increased his popularity. Here in exile he developed his political and religious philosophy of God's supremacy in political affairs and salvation from below.

On a visit to Brussels in 1860, Hugo resumed work on *Les Misères*, begun in 1845. There on the plain of Mont-Saint-Jean, he wrote the Waterloo chapter and reshaped *Les Misères* to become *Les Misérables*. He intended to complete *Les Misérables* on the battlefield of Waterloo and in the month the battle occurred, though it was actually completed in May of the following year.<sup>13</sup> Ironically, it is this pivotal chapter that critics often cite as superfluous.

Only in 1870, when he thought his country needed his help after France's defeat to Germany at the battle of Sedan, did he return to Paris. He was elected to the assembly which met to form a new government after the

fall of Napoleon III in 1871. His *Terrible Year* portrays France's difficulties after the German siege of Paris. Though he was elected senator in 1876, he began to take a less active role in politics. During this time he wrote *The Art of Being a Grandfather* (1877), bringing him still further popularity and affection. Legend says that in 1885, two million French turned out for his funeral procession from the Arc de Triomphe to the Pantheon though Paris's population was fewer than two million at that time. <sup>14</sup>

*Les Misérables* is based on a chain of beneficence that builds as characters intentionally or unintentionally assist one another, linking all to the overall Good. Although the religion is part of the chain, the law is not. The bishop protects Valjean from the law when Valjean has, in fact, stolen from him. A nun lies for Valjean and a convent shelters him for years. But Javert, representing unjust, unquestioning law, pursues him relentlessly, until Javert commits suicide in the face of the Truth: that the law is wrong. Hugo's point is not that society should break laws but that laws should be just. After Valjean realizes his corruption, he is reborn as Monsieur Madeleine, a man who establishes a factory to bring work to a dying town, who amasses wealth to give to the poor, who risks exposing real identity when he lifts the cart off Fauchelevent, and who assumes parental responsibility for the illegitimate and abused Cosette. Valjean is rewarded for his self-sacrificing kindnesses when Fauchelevent later conceals him from Javert and Cosette brightens his existence.

The chain is also linked through Marius. Ironically, this chain also begins with a crime. As Thénardier is robbing corpses at Waterloo, he meets Pontmercy, who mistakenly thinks Thénardier has saved his life. In his will Pontmercy charges his son Marius with assisting Thénardier out of gratitude, and Marius does assist him, even when he is aware of Thénardier's depravity. In turn Thénardier's daughter Eponine throws herself in front of a bullet meant for Marius. Hugo further advances his point through the name "Pontmercy," literally meaning "bridge of mercy." The chain affects even Javert; for just as Valjean spares his life, he spares Valjean's.

As historical fiction, *Les Misérables* entwines the fictive and the factual to offer an explanation for the turbulence of the age. Though Valjean is named mayor under the pseudonym Monsieur Madeleine, he is anti-political in his role and quickly drops into hiding, relinquishing his office. He remains outside of politics. Political views are instead expressed through Gillenormand, Pontmercy, and Marius. Gillenormand, Marius's grandfather represents the royalists who tried to deny the revolution, a denial symbolized by Gillenormand's attempt to raise Marius as a royalist, unaware of his father's existence. When Marius discovers his father he discovers the value of revolution as a necessary part of progress. <sup>15</sup>

In the criticized and misunderstood Waterloo digression, Hugo links the fictional, symbolic characters with the factual. The digression is a lengthy description of the battle that marked Napoleon's defeat. Hugo saw history as God's action and text, which man need only read and interpret. The Waterloo digression is his interpretation. <sup>16</sup> His strong belief in God and need for comfort from his life's tragedies forced him to conclude that all is working universally toward the Infinite, which is in control. This progression toward the Infinite is more than a forward movement of events; it is also a fluctuation of revolution and relapse into seemingly defeated states. Hence, the French Revolution was followed by reinstatement of the Bourbons, followed by Napoleon's reign, followed again by reinstatement of the Bourbons, and so on. The Bourbons were not just rulers, and therefore, revolution was necessary. But neither was Napoleon a just leader. Waterloo was to have ended France's tyranny, but liberation under Napoleon was impossible because Napoleon was himself tyrannical. <sup>17</sup>

Hugo uses the laughter motif to illustrate the ironies of Truth. In the Waterloo digression, he shows Napoleon on the battlefield laughing at his presumed victory. Napoleon fails to take into account the Infinite; however, for as the narrator states, "The perfect smile belongs to God alone." <sup>18</sup> God is Waterloo's victor. Later in the

novel Gavroche dies amid a burst of laughter, laughter that represents the young, passionate, emerging Paris.  
<sup>19</sup> Hugo uses Napoleon to show that God controls even the political world.

Though less obviously than in the Waterloo chapter, Napoleon's influence runs throughout *Les Misérables*. The date Valjean is imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread coincides with Napoleon's rise. Conversely, Valjean returns from prison on the same road Napoleon used to return from Elba for the Hundred Days, after which he was defeated at Waterloo. Valjean's imprisonment from 1796-1815 corresponds to the climax of Napoleon's reign—from the Italian campaign to the Hundred Days. In Digne, where Valjean meets the bishop, were first printed Napoleon's proclamations brought from Elba. <sup>20</sup> Valjean, entirely removed from politics, is Napoleon's antithesis.

Hugo stresses his disapproval of Napoleon by paralleling Valjean with Christ. The Christ parallels and allusions are numerous. After the bishop buys Valjean's soul, in effect, Valjean assumes a new name, Monsieur Madeleine, his Christian name, referencing Mary Magdalene. He spends the rest of his life helping the poor and downtrodden. After much mental anguish, Valjean gives up his life for Champmathieu, who would otherwise go to the galleys in his place. Here he realizes that he can "only enter into holiness in God's eyes, by returning to infamy in men's!" <sup>21</sup> Again a prisoner he breaks his chain to save a sailor on the Orion and then leaps overboard in a sort of baptism. In the law's eyes he dies, but in reality he is resurrected. He becomes an intercessor for Gosette, teaching her to pray and becoming her "father." When Javert chases him, he falls into the garden of a convent, where he and Gosette are sheltered for years, protected from all evil. When he contemplates risking his own life for Marius's, he parallels Christ praying on the Mount of Olives; when he carries Marius on his back through the Parisian sewers, he parallels Christ carrying the cross. In addition Hugo associates Valjean in the sewers with Jonah in the belly of the whale. Chapter titles clearly advance his point: "Man of Sorrows," "The Last Drop in the Chalice," "The Intestine of the Leviathan," and "He Also Bears His Cross."

The Christ parallels illustrate Hugo's theme that it is necessary to descend in order to ascend, and that one must descend willingly, just as Christ did. Though he often hesitates, as Christ once did, Valjean always chooses the difficult path of self-sacrifice. It is when he is helping other that he gains the impetus to progress. Only when he is struggling in the mire of the fontis at the sewer's lowest point does his foot catch the upward slope, enabling him to ascend with Marius to safety.

To advance the idea of descent, Hugo uses two unusual motifs: slang and excrement. He depicts slang as poetry of the masses because it uses metaphors and concealed meanings. <sup>22</sup> He saw slang as the language of revolution, the Word which would eventually rise out of the underworld into revolution and rebirth. He also likened the mud and mire of the battlefield to that of the sewers. Both at Waterloo and in the sewers came rebirth. The gang of criminals, Patron-Minette, symbolizes the paradox of salvation from below. "Minette" suggests early morning and birth, as well as a mine and the dregs of the city. <sup>23</sup> The revolution at the barricades draws together the users of slang, including Patron-Minette, in the mire of battle for a noble cause; thus, motifs and characters associated with descent are entwined in rebirth and revolution.

Salvation for Valjean, however, extends beyond ascension. He enters the novel as a nameless passerby, and throughout the novel he is hesitatingly named. His humility runs from beginning to end and is especially apparent when he refuses to identify himself as the man Who saved Marius. To the end he still sees himself as a convict, despite all his kind deeds. As the bishop mystically blesses Valjean above his deathbed, it would appear that he has ascended to the bishop's holy status, when he has instead transcended it. In the opening chapters, the bishop visits a former deputy of the National Council, which voted to execute Louis XVI. Near

death, the former deputy compares the revolution to the Advent of Christ and speaks of joining the Infinite. The bishop had originally intended to bless the former deputy, but he instead falls down on his knees and asks this man, whom the town considers evil, to bless him. The bishop recognizes his own shortcoming: he has not risen from below as the former deputy has. He has not descended and therefore cannot ascend to the former deputy's height. Unlike the bishop, Valjean, the convict-turned-saint, has descended, and it is he who transcends.

For Valjean the ultimate honor is dishonor; the ultimate renown is self-effacement. Valjean is no longer necessary in Cosette's life, and so he dies. Marius replaces Valjean, a mere passerby. The last chapter, "Grass Conceals and Rain Blots Out," recalls the Waterloo digression in which water is a dominant symbol. Hugo compares the battlefield to a wave, details the well as a mass grave, and portrays water constructing as well as destroying.<sup>24</sup> Later he again uses water and the fluidity of land to describe the sewers. Finally, water blots out any mark of Valjean's existence. In his digression on convents, the narrator states, "This is a book whose first character is the Infinite . . . we meet the Infinite in man."<sup>25</sup> In the final chapter, Valjean, the passerby, has merged with the Infinite.

Hugo constructed *Les Misérables* to advance his theme. He believed the world has two readings: historical and cyclical. The historical reading interprets events as following one another in a line; the cyclical reading interprets them as circling to the point of origin. The "idea of forward movement links up to the point of origin."<sup>26</sup> The historical reading accounts for the fluctuation between revolution and restoration; the cyclical reading accounts for consistency in the way things are. The novel's fluctuation between plot advancement and digression mirrors this forward and backward movement; its reaffirmation of Valjean as passerby mirrors a return to the point of origin.

Through characters who symbolize factions of the day, a plot that builds a chain of beneficence, and motifs of descension and effacement, Hugo develops his theme that salvation for the masses originates with the downtrodden. He justifies civilizations seeming losses with his idea of progress in both forward and backward movement. He also shows that progress comes not from the political but from the religious. "Progress must believe in God. Goodness cannot have an impious servant. An atheist is a bad leader for mankind."<sup>27</sup> Thus Hugo portrays Valjean as the humble convict-turned-saint, the pious servant, saviour of the masses, at one with the Infinite.

Study of *Les Misérables* could take from six to eleven weeks depending on the level of students and depth of study. The unit is adaptable for tenth grade honors and college preparatory classes, and eleventh and twelfth grade honors, college preparatory, and basic classes. Unfortunately the novel's massive length makes teaching it in its entirety nearly impossible. The New American Library's 1987 paperback edition of the classic C. E. Wilbour translation is 1,463 pages long, and whereas students eagerly race through passages about Valjean and peripheral characters, they labor over the especially long digressions. But rather than eliminate its study entirely teachers can easily adapt it for specific classes. One particularly good adaptation, edited by Edmund Fuller and Olga Ochtenhagen, is included in the anthology *Four Novels for Adventure*. Unfortunately, this edition has several shortcomings: it eliminates portions of the novel key for thematic understanding, such as the Waterloo, convent, and slang digressions, and the description of Valjean's tombstone; it is printed in two columns with footnotes, and some students have difficulties with this format. The edition is useful, however, because it pares down excesses and provides excellent footnotes. It also includes a helpful afterward and many study questions requiring critical thinking. Teachers could easily supplement this edition with xeroxed portions of the unabridged edition.

This unit seeks to enable students to read, understand, and enjoy *Les Misérables*, as well as improve their skills in literary analysis, writing, and listening. Through study of biblical and historical allusions, symbols, metaphors, and other figurative language, students will be able to trace the theme of salvation from below. Reading about social injustices in Nineteenth Century France will bring students to consider social injustices in the Twentieth Century. Especially appropriate in this unit would be comparison to other novels that deal with these themes, such as Charles Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* , Mark Twain ' s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* , Upton Sinclair, s *Jungle* , and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* . Students will study Jean Valjean's archetypal journey wherein he meets evils of all kind on and beneath the streets of Paris, a journey comparable to Odysseus'. Through historical and biographical background, students will be able to understand Hugo's reasons for writing the novel as he did.

### **Activities :**

1. Increase students' comprehension and enjoyment by giving them reading strategies, such as reading titles, subtitles, and footnotes before reading the text, practicing pronunciation and spelling of names, and recognizing digression and figures of speech. This preparation is especially necessary with students of limited ability.
2. Have students keep a notebook of their impressions as they read the novel. In the notebook students can also record thematic developments, character development, and favorite passages, for example. Use the notebook to spark discussion and writing.
3. Show students how to diagram motifs threaded throughout the novel and have them use the diagram as an analytical tool. (See below.)

*Diagram of the Pursuit Motif* : The character's motive for the pursuit is written on the arrow.

4. To illustrate the poetic nature of slang, have students compile a lexicon of slang, explaining its metaphors and derivations. The most valuable part of this exercise could be a discussion of levels of usage.
5. To sharpen listening skills, play selections from the recording of the musical. Encourage students to listen for the singer's tone, the orchestration, and the lyrics to identify the character singing and the song's context.
6. Have students dramatize several scenes using their own scripts. One scene that makes for excellent slapstick comedy is Fauchelevent's attempt to get the gravedigger drunk, so he can free Valjean from the coffin in which he is hiding.
7. Have students sketch scenes or characters. Compare them with Hugo's sketches.
8. Have students apply their knowledge of Hugo's philosophy with the statements below, explaining how the author would feel about issues the statement raises, how they know, and their own feeling about the statement. (See below.)
  - a. Jail is a corrupting institution.
  - b. Authority is always right.
  - c. All persons are equal.
  - d. A people should carry out their responsibilities without question.
  - e. We should increase our number of reformatories.
  - f. A simple, insignificant kindness could change someone's life.
  - g. Parents are solely responsible for what their children become.
  - h. Once people sink into depravity, there is little they can do to change.
  - i. People should just look out for themselves.
9. After complete study of the novel, have students view the film version and compare

effectiveness of the two genres.

10. Have students consider thought-provoking questions in small groups. Some possibilities are listed below:

a. To what extent did the doctor act unprofessionally when he told Fantine her daughter had been brought to her?

b. Does the nun commit a sin by lying to Javert? Explain.

c. To what extent would Valjean be responsible for Marius's death if he chose not to rescue him?

11. Have students write on a number of topics. Some possibilities are religious symbols, sea imagery, motives of love and duty, Valjean as Christ figure, Valjean as Napoleon's antithesis, historical allusions, biblical allusions, portrayal of women, portrayal of the poor, reasons for Javert's suicide, parent/child communication, social injustices, the novel as romanticism/realism, the novel as sociological/historical fiction, the role of coincidence, the role of the bishop, the nature of progress, and the author's purpose as stated in the preface.

12. Many students quickly dismiss a classic because it is seemingly old and irrelevant. After they have studied the novel, however, they are often surprised they actually enjoyed it and found it meaningful. One reason for this belated enjoyment is that too often students do not read the novel and know of it only through class discussion. If class discussion interests them, they may try to go back and read it. But many give up, thinking it is too late.



The following game takes students through the streets of Paris, confronting them with adversities and opportunities for kindness. Like Valjean, they must deal with choices and chance, and they are given the opportunity to learn that decisions bring consequences. Ideally, they will discover advantages in helping rather than ignoring or obstructing other players, as did Valjean. The game motivates students to read the novel and learn its concepts.

This board game may be played once or several times a week but should be played enough so that students keep up with the class readings and discussions. It could replace daily quizzes and provide a meaningful context to encourage independent thinking. Teachers need to make up their own questions, depending on the level of students and emphasis desired. Questions on plot, characters, motifs, symbols, historical and sociological background, and so on, could all be used effectively. Teachers will also need to prepare game boards, one for each group of three to five players.

**Object** The object is for players to answer questions correctly, advancing them past the bishop. The player that passes the bishop first wins the game.

**Materials** Playing board (See sample below.), die, colored paper clips (one per player), and question/instruction cards.

### **Instructions**

1. Roll the die to determine who goes first.
2. The first player begins by drawing a card from the pile in the center of the board. (Questions are face up.) The player reads the question aloud and attempts to answer it. She may give only one answer. If the player answers the question correctly, she then rolls the die and advances the number of spaces indicated. If the player answers incorrectly, she must go to the Grand Sewer during this round and come back into play at the River Seine when it is her turn. She then attempts to answer a question and proceeds in the game.
3. There are two types of cards in the center of the board: question cards and instruction cards. Some instruction cards indicate that a player *must* follow the instructions on the card; however, other instruction cards offer a choice to help, disregard, or hurt another player. The choice is that of the player who drew the card.
4. Some spaces on the board contain instructions. These instructions must be followed each time a player lands on the space.
5. To win, a player must answer a question correctly on the bishop's space. Answering the question correctly will advance the player past the bishop and into the center of the board.

Sample Cards:

*(figure available in print form)*

*(figure available in print form)*

## Notes

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1. Samuel Edwards, *Victor Hugo: A Tumultuous Life*, ed. Noel Bertram Gerson (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1971) 2-3.
2. Eugene Ionesco, *Hugoliad or The Grotesque and Tragic Life of Victor Hugo*, ed. trans. Dragomir Costineanu (New York: Grove Press, 1987) 102.
3. Ionesco 102.
4. Victor Brombert, *Victor Hugo and the Visionary Novel*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984) 2.
5. Brombert 3.
6. Brombert 2.
7. Edwards 8.
8. Lee Fahnestock, Introduction, *Les Misérables*, by Victor Hugo, trans. C. E. Wilbour (New York: NAL, 1987) ix.
9. Brombert 118.
10. Edwards 19.
11. Fahnestock iiv.
12. Hugo wrote of this responsibility in "The Poet's Mission" found in *Light and Shadow*.
13. Edwards 210.
14. Edwards 5.
15. Brombert 102-103.
16. Brombert 126.
17. Brombert 107.
18. Fahnestock 319.
19. Brombert 112-13.
20. Brombert 89-90.
21. Fahnestock 227.
22. Brombert 116.
23. Brombert 114.
24. Brombert 93.
25. Fahnestock 509.
26. Brombert 128.
27. Fahnestock 43.

## Teacher's Bibliography

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A thorough interpretation of the author's major novels and an invaluable resource for teaching *Les Misérables* . Includes photos of the author's pencil sketches.

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An objective, detailed biography. Provides excellent insight into the man in his time.

Hampson, Norman. *A Social History of the French Revolution* . London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963.

An informative and detailed account of developments leading to the French Revolution.

Ionesco, Eugene. *Hugoliad or The Grotesque and Tragic Life of Victor Hugo* . Trans. Dragomir Costinaeu. New York: Grove Press, 1987.

A scathing evaluation of the man and his works. Though finished, this book provides unmatched insight into the other side of the story. A must for both admirers and skeptics of Hugo.

Lefebvre, Georges. *The Coming of the French Revolution* . Trans. R. R. Palmer. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1947.

Reasons for the French Revolution.

Palmer, R. R. and Joel Colton. *A History of the Modern World* . New York: Knopf, 1978.

An excellent historical reference. Provides thorough information on the French Revolution in a world perspective.

Peyre, Henri. *Victor Hugo: Philosophy and Poetry* . Trans. Roda P. Roberts. University of Alabama: U of Alabama P, 1980.

Provides additional insight into Hugo's philosophy through his poetry.

## Students' Bibliography

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Fahnestock, Lee. Introduction. *Les Misérables* . By Victor Hugo. Trans. C. E. Wilbour. New York: NAL, 1987.

The complete and updated definitive translation. The introduction provides much necessary background.

Hugo, Victor. *Les Misérables* . *Four Novels for Adventure*. Eds. Edmund Fuller and Olga Ochtenhagen. New York: Harcourt, 1960, 167-444.

An abridged translation. Contains footnotes, an insightful afterward, and study questions.

## Classroom Materials

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Boublil, Alain, and Claude-Michel Schönberg. *Les Misérables*. With Golm Wilkinson, Roger Allam, Michael Ball, and Rebecca Caine. Cond. Martin Koch. Original London Cast. Exallshow Ltd., 1985.

A recording of the beautiful and textually-accurate Tony Award-winning musical. Excellent for listening activities.

Fabrikant, Geraldine. "'Misérables' Already a Financial Hit." *New York Times* 2 Mar. 1987: C11.

An explanation for the Broadway musical's popularity and its ranking with other successful musicals. Photos included.

Gerard, Jeremy. "The Hunter and the Hunted." *New York Times* 8 Mar. 1987: H1+.

A discussion of the dynamics between Valjean and Javert as depicted in the Broadway musical. Large photo of the two characters included.

Holden, Stephen. "Baritone at the Barricades." *New York Times* 22 Mar. 1987: H5.

Focuses on the young students at the barricades as depicted in the Broadway musical. Includes photo of Enjolras.

Kroll, Jack, and Constance Guthrie. "A Show of Shows." *Newsweek* 30 Mar. 1987: 62-67.

A colorful spread on the Broadway musical.

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