

GREAT
LAKES
THEATER

TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE



LES MISÉRABLES

A NEW PRODUCTION OF BOUBIL & SCHÖNBERG'S MUSICAL EPIC

BASED ON A NOVEL BY VICTOR HUGO

DIRECTED BY VICTORIA BUSSERT

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Charles Fee

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Fall 2014

Dear Educator,

Thank you for your student matinee ticket order to Great Lakes Theater's production *Les Misérables* by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, which will be performed in repertory with William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in the beautiful Hanna Theatre at PlayhouseSquare from September 26th through November 9th.

Based on the book by Victor Hugo, this unforgettable blockbuster musical sweeps audiences through an epic tale of broken dreams, passion and redemption, set against the backdrop of a French nation in the throes of revolution. Relentlessly pursued by the policeman Javert for breaking his parole, the unjustly convicted Jean Valjean must leave his past behind and keep his vow to raise the orphaned Cosette. With insurrection in the air and Javert closing in, Valjean has no choice but to fight for his life and sacrifice everything to protect the people he loves – in a timeless testament to the survival of the human spirit.

This guide is designed – through essays, discussion questions and classroom activities – to give students both an introduction to, and a point of entry for, a personal exploration of *Les Misérables*. We offer special thanks to Madelon Horvath for her outstanding contributions to this guide.

Great Lakes Theater is proud to provide you with the finest in classic theater and the necessary educational resources to support your work in the classroom. We are thrilled that you will be coming to see us and we welcome your input on how best to support your classroom preparation for our work. Please let us know what you think!

Sincerely,

Kelly Schaffer Florian
Director of Educational Services
kflorian@greatlakes theater.org

A NOTE TO STUDENTS:

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATER



You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc.,

be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a silent cell phone (used for text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as a camera and editor, choosing his or her personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there are design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

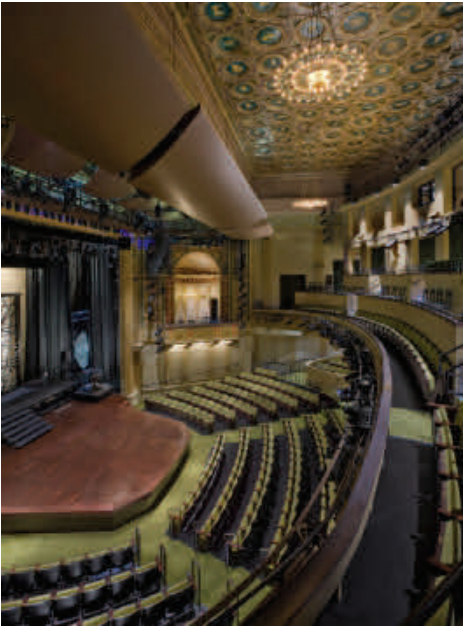
The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.

GLT: OUR HISTORY, OUR FUTURE



Tom Hanks and fellow company member Bert Goldstein.



The beautifully renovated Hanna Theatre

Since 1962, Great Lakes Theater (GLT) has brought the world's greatest plays to life for all of Cleveland. In 1961, the Lakewood Board of Education president persuaded a Shakespeare troupe, led by Arthur Lithgow, to make Lakewood Civic Auditorium its home. The theater that opened its doors on July 11, 1962 as Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival presented six Shakespeare plays in rotating repertory. In exchange for free rent, the company provided student matinee productions. The repertory was expanded in 1965 to include non-Shakespearean classics as a result of an exchange of productions with Princeton's McCarter Theater. The Company outgrew its original home at Lakewood Civic Auditorium and, in 1982, made the move to the Ohio Theatre in PlayhouseSquare, launching the revitalization of downtown Cleveland's Theatre District.

In 2001 the Company was searching for a new Producing Artistic Director, and the Board sought a candidate with well-established business skills as well as artistic leadership. Charles Fee was selected for his commitment to Shakespeare and his reputation for building Idaho Shakespeare Festival into a highly successful regional theater. GLT recommitted itself to its founding core values: Shakespeare, rotating repertory and an acting company of the highest caliber. During Fee's tenure, the company has been recognized for its artistic excellence, winning the *Northern Ohio Live Magazine Award* for excellence in Theater in 2005 after three years of being a finalist, as well as *The Free Times Reader's Choice Award* for Best Performing Arts Group in 2006, and for eliminating the inherited accumulated net deficit of over one million dollars.

The Company has also been a revolutionary producing model unlike any other in America to create cost efficiency and enhance our artistic product. We now exchange our repertory productions with Idaho Shakespeare Festival (ISF) in Boise, Idaho and Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival (LTSF) in Nevada. This deep collaboration between independent producing organizations is a first in American theater. With this visionary model now fully in place, GLT, ISF, and LTSF are able to deepen the artistic quality of the work on our stages, share our production costs, maximize our resources, and provide nearly year-round employment to our resident company of artists.

Now, GLT has entered into a new phase, making the historic Hanna Theatre in Playhouse Square its home. The renovation of the Hanna Theatre, as well as the creation of GLT's first endowment fund, is part of our *Re-Imagine A Classic* Campaign to ensure GLT's future. Our new home in the Hanna features a hydraulically operated thrust stage, a first for this region, and innovative and intimate seating where no seat is farther than eleven rows from the stage. We believe that this extraordinary theater experience will revolutionize the way Northern Ohio experiences classic theater.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. With a plucky history of bucking economic trends to strive for and nurture the highest artistic quality, it remains a distinctive and significant cultural resource in an extraordinary American city.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

BY VICTORIA BUSSERT

“

There is no doubt that *Les Misérables* is a global phenomenon; it's thru-composed score changed the landscape of musical theatre and welcomed a new generation of “epic” musicals.

”



Les Misérables has been a blockbuster hit since 1862; that was the year Victor Hugo's soaring saga of social injustice, revolution, hope and redemption was published in Paris. It took Hugo almost twenty years to write the 1200 pages or 365 chapters that make up what many believe to be one of the greatest novels of all time — it sold out its initial print run on the very first day.

The journey from novel to musical is an interesting one. In 1978, Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, friends for more than a decade, attended the London revival of Lionel Bart's *Oliver* based on the Charles Dickens novel and produced by a young, Cameron Mackintosh. While watching the production, Boublil began to see striking similarities between the Artful Dodger of *Oliver* and the street urchin, Gavroche, in Hugo's novel; during the performance he continued to uncover more and more character parallels between the two works. Describing that evening Boublil says, “I was in a kind of trance the whole evening and came out of that incredible production obsessed. I was going to do the same. I had no doubts...the characters were all there...so I went back to Paris, spent time with the novel, went through it with my pen thinking this would make a song and this wouldn't, and called Claude-Michel.”

The collaborators were so confident and excited by the project that they gave up their jobs and committed their time to writing this epic musical; it became a two-year labor of cutting, condensing and shaping. Alain and Claude-Michel produced a demo tape of their musical with Claude-Michel at the piano singing all the parts — male and female. Robert Hossein, a well-known director, heard their cassette and agreed to tackle the first production at the Palais des Sports which happened to have an unexpected three month scheduling gap between *Holiday On Ice* and the Moscow State Circus. The initial production had many problems including the testing of a transmitter on the Eiffel Tower making the actor's microphones unusable at the first preview. The frustrated director went onstage and ordered the audience to go home; however, most of them waited out the hour and a half

delay and didn't leave the theatre until the show's completion at one o'clock in the morning. In those three months of performances, more than 500,000 people packed the sports arena to witness this epic production. "It was a huge success," recalled Schönberg, "but when it finished, it was finished."

Or was it? Much later, the collaborators heard from the French Society of Writers that a British producer named Cameron Mackintosh, the same man who had produced the revival of *Oliver*, was looking for them. They met for lunch in Paris on February 4, 1983. "We didn't know it," said Schönberg, "but it was the most important day of our lives." Two years later *Les Misérables* opened at the RSC in London, later transferring to the Palace Theatre, and in 2004 to the Queens Theatre where it has been running ever since. Mackintosh says, "I am often asked what it is that makes audiences and actors so passionate about *Les Mis*, as the show is fondly known. The abbreviation of the title is maybe a clue — in Hugo's story the characters are so personal, so timeless, so universal, they remain a contemporary mirror of ourselves. Audiences feel possessive of this timeless tale, where the downtrodden have to fight to be heard and sometimes die to be free, yet in their darkest struggle find love, life and laughter, and mankind's most redeeming trait, the unquenchable survival of the human spirit."

Les Misérables originally opened at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. in December of 1986, a city specifically chosen due to its audience's sophistication and political awareness. It made the move to Broadway on March 12, 1987 opening to rave reviews and winning eight Tony Awards. The original production closed in 2003 with revivals in 2007 and 2014. There is no doubt that *Les Misérables* is a global phenomenon; it's thru-composed score changed the landscape of musical theatre and welcomed a new generation of "epic" musicals. And yet, it's somehow especially fitting that the Idaho Shakespeare Festival and the Great Lakes Theater, sister companies that share the Royal Shakespeare Company vision of valuing Shakespeare and musicals side-by-side, should bring *Les Misérables* back into a classical theatre company. Welcome home, *Les Mis* — tonight we hear the people sing.

Dramatis Personae

Jean Valjean... Stephen Mitchell Brown*

Javert... Brian Sutherland*

Farmer ... Tom Ford*

The Bishop of Digne... Lynn Robert Berg

Constables... Mickey Ryan, Sam Wolf

Factory Foreman... Alex Syiek*

Fantine... Jodi Dominick*

Factory Girl... Katie Proulx

Old Woman... Laura Welsh Berg*

Bamatabois... Brandyn Day

Fauchelevant... Lynn Robert Berg*

Little Cosette... Lexi Cowan, Calista Zajac

Madame Thénardier... Tracee Patterson*

Thénardier... Tom Ford*

Prostitute... Laura Welsh Berg*

Gavroche... Colin Frothingham, Colin Wheeler

Éponine... Keri René Fuller

Cosette... Claire Howe Eisentrout*

Loud Hailer... Tom Ford*

Major Domo... Ian Gould*

Thénardier's Gang:

Montparnasse... Ian Gould*

Babet... M.A. Taylor*

Brujon... Lynn Robert Berg*

Claquesous... Alex Syiek*

Students:

Enjolras... Kyle Jean Baptiste

Marius... Pedar Benson Bate*

Combeferre... Lynn Robert Berg*

Feuilly... Brandyn Day

Courfeyrac... Sam Wolf*

Joly... Micky Ryan

Grantaire... Alex Syiek*

Lesgles... M.A. Taylor*

Jean Prouvaire... Ian Gould*

* Member of Actors' Equity Association

SYNOPSIS

Act One

Prologue: 1815, Digne

After 19 years on the chain gang, Jean Valjean finds that the ticket-of-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 silver. Valjean is caught and brought back by the police and is astonished when the Bishop lies to the police to save him. 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 locket, her 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 the hospital instead.

The Mayor then rescues a man pinned beneath a cart. 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 to find and look after her daughter Cosette. Javert arrives to arrest him but Valjean escapes.

1823, Montfermeil

Cosette has been lodged with the Thénardiens, who horribly abuse her while indulging their own daughter, Éponine. Valjean pays the Thénardiens to let him take her away to Paris.

1832, Paris

Nine years later there is unrest in the city because of the likely demise of the popular leader General Larque, 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 Thénardier’s 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 her father'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.



Idaho Shakespeare Festival's Production of *Les Misérables*, now playing at GLT's Hanna Theatre.

Act Two

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 rejoin 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 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 the hospital. Javert lets Valjean go, and, his unbending principles of justice having been shattered by Valjean's own mercy, he 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 that he stole from a corpse the night the barricade fell. It is Marius' own ring, and he realizes it was Valjean who rescued him that night. He and Cosette go to Valjean where

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act 1

Prologue: 1815, Digne

“Prologue”... The Company

“Soliloquy”... Valjean

1823, Montreuil-Sur-Mer

“At the End of the Day”... Factory Workers

“I Dreamed a Dream”... Fantine

“Lovely Ladies”... Ladies & Clients

“Who Am I?”... Valjean

“Fantine’s Death”... Fantine & Valjean

“Castle on a Cloud”... Cosette

1823, Montfermeil

“Master of the House”... Thénardier, Mme Thénardier & Customers

“The Bargain”... M. & Mme Thénardier & Valjean

1832, Paris

“Paris”... Gavroche & the Beggars

“Stars”... Javert

“ABC Café”... Enjolras, Marius, & the Students

“The People’s Song”... Enjolras, the Students & the Citizens

“In My Life”... Cosette, Valjean, Marius & Éponine

“One Day More”... The Company

Act 2

“On My Own”... Éponine

“A Little Fall of Rain”... Éponine & Marius

“Drink With Me to Days Gone By”... Feuilly, Grantaire, Students & Women

“Bring Him Home”... Valjean

“Dog Eats Dog”... Thénardier

“Soliloquy”... Javert

“Turning”... The Women

“Empty Chairs at Empty Tables”... Marius

“Wedding Chale”... Guests

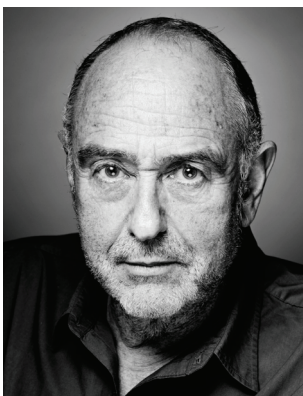
“Beggars at the Feast”... M. & Mme Thénardier

“Finale” ... The Company

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

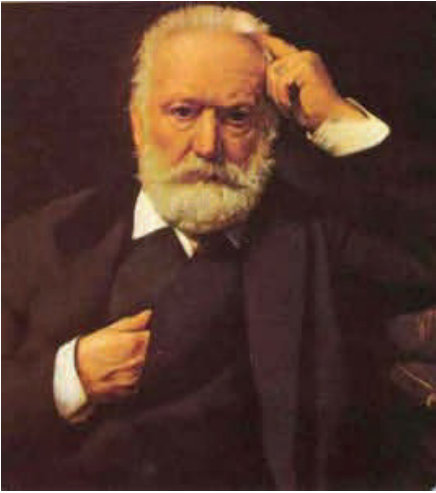


Alain Boublil's first musical, *La Revolution Française* in 1973, marked his transition from songwriting to musical theatre and the start of his collaboration with Claude-Michel Schönberg with the hit album that became the first ever staged French musical. His idea of writing a musical version of *Les Misérables* brought them together again in 1978. The acclaimed show was written over a two-year period and recorded as an album before its opening at the Palais de Sports in Paris in September 1980. In 1983 Mr. Boublil met Cameron Mackintosh which led to his first London production *Abbacadabra* (a musical fairy-tale set to ABBA music) and to working with Claude-Michel and directors and writers on the English language adaptation of *Les Misérables*. The show has subsequently opened in 19 countries and 14 languages. Among the many awards Mr. Boublil has received were two Tony Awards in 1987 for Best Score and Best Book for the NY production and a 1988 Grammy for the Best Original Broadway Cast Recording which he co-produced with Claude-Michel Schönberg. *Miss Saigon* opened on September 20, 1989 at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London and on April 11, 1991 in NY.



Claude-Michel Schönberg is a successful record producer and songwriter who began his collaboration with Alain Boublil in 1973, writing the very first French musical, *La Revolution Française*. Mr. Schönberg played the role of Louis XVI in that production and also co-produced the double-gold record album of the show. In 1974, he recorded an album, singing his own compositions and lyrics, which included the number-one hit single *Le Premier Pas*. In 1980, after two years' work on the score, Mr. Schönberg and Mr. Boublil's musical *Les Misérables* opened in Paris, where it was seen by more than 1.5 million people. In 1983, Mr. Schönberg produced an opera album in Paris with Julia Migenes Johnson and the Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra. Following work on the London production of *Les Misérables* (the 3rd longest running musical in British theatre history), Mr. Schönberg co-produced the double-platinum London cast album and became involved in casting all the major overseas productions of the show, including the American, Japanese and Australian companies. He won two Tony Awards, for Best Score and Book, for the Broadway production of *Les Misérables* and a Grammy Award for the Best Original Cast Recording, which he co-produced with Alain Boublil. He also worked closely on the symphonic recording of the show. His score for *Miss Saigon*, again written in collaboration with Alain Boublil, repeated the international success story of *Les Misérables*. Produced by Cameron Mackintosh and again bringing together many members of the creative team behind *Les Misérables*, *Miss Saigon* opened with huge success at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in London in September 1989, in NY in April 1991, and in Chicago (the first national U.S. tour) in November 1992.

VICTOR HUGO



Victor Hugo was born on February 26, 1802, in Besançon, France. After training as a lawyer, Hugo embarked on the literary career. He became one of the most important French Romantic poets, novelists and dramatists of his time, having assembled a massive body of work while living in Paris, Brussels and the Channel Islands. Hugo died on May 22, 1885, in Paris.

Victor-Marie Hugo was born in Besançon, France, on February 26, 1802, to mother Sophie Trébuque and father Joseph-Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo. His father was a military officer who later served as a general under Napoleon.

Victor Hugo studied law between 1815 and 1818, though he never committed himself to legal practice. Encouraged by his mother, Hugo embarked on a career in literature. He founded the *Conservateur Littéraire*, a journal in which he published his own poetry and the work of his friends. His mother died in 1821.

The same year, Hugo married Adèle Foucher and published his first book of poetry, *Odes et poésies diverses*. His first novel was published in 1823, followed by a number of plays.

Hugo's innovative brand of Romanticism developed over the first decade of his career. In 1831, he published one of his most enduring works, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*). Set in the medieval period, the novel presents a harsh criticism of the society that degrades and shuns the hunchback Quasimodo. This was Hugo's most celebrated work to date, and paved the way for his subsequent political writing.

A prolific writer, Hugo was established as one of the most celebrated literary figures in France by the 1840s. In 1841, he was elected to the French Academy and nominated for the Chamber of Peers. He stepped back from publishing his work following the accidental drowning of his daughter and her husband in 1843. In private, he began work on a piece of writing that would become *Les Misérables*.

Hugo fled to Brussels following a coup in 1851. He lived in Brussels and in Britain until his return to France in 1870. Much of the work that Hugo published during this period conveys biting sarcasm and fierce social criticism. Among these works is the novel *Les Misérables*, was finally published in 1862. The book was an immediate success in Europe and the United States. Later reinterpreted as a theatrical musical and a film, *Les Misérables* remains one of the best-known works of 19th century literature.

— *Biography.com*

LEARN MORE AND EXPLORE!

The French Revolution for Dummies (and *Les Misérable* Watchers)

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/12/24/the-french-revolution-for-dummies-and-les-mis-rables-watchers.html#>

Enjoy *Les Misérables*. But Please get the history straight.

<http://bookhaven.stanford.edu/2012/12/enjoy-les-miserables-but-please-get-your-history-straight-first/>

Ten-Minute History: the June Rebellion of 1832

<http://prezi.com/rtd1owzl5-5c/ten-minute-history-the-june-rebellion-of-1832/>

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

COSTUME DESIGN

BY ESTHER HABERLEN

#1

JEAN VALJEAN/ CHAINGANG
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

BY CLAUDE-STEPHIE
SCHONBERG &
ALAIN BOUILLÉ

LES MISÉRABLES



Esther M. Habalen 2014

#6

VALJEAN 2/ MAYOR 1823
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

BY CLAUDE-STEPHIE
SCHONBERG &
ALAIN BOUILLÉ

LES MISÉRABLES



Esther M. Habalen 2014

#2

JAVERT 1/ PRISON GUARD
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

BY CLAUDE-STEPHIE
SCHONBERG &
ALAIN BOUILLÉ

LES MISÉRABLES



Esther M. Habalen 2014

#4

FANTINE "I DREAMED A DREAM"
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

BY CLAUDE-STEPHIE
SCHONBERG &
ALAIN BOUILLÉ

LES MISÉRABLES



Esther M. Habalen 2014

#12 THENARDIER
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#13 MADAME THENARDIER
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#3 BISHOP OF DIGNÉ/ GUARDS
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#14 YOUNG COSETTE
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#9 FANTINE "LOVELY LADIES"
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#8 WHORES & PIMP "LOVELY LADIES"
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#20

ENJOLRAS/ MARIUS PONTMERCY
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

LES MISÉRABLES



#17

COSETTE ACT 1
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

LES MISÉRABLES



#19

EPONINE ACT 1
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

LES MISÉRABLES



#22

EPONINE ACT 2
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

LES MISÉRABLES



#21

GAVROCHE & BARRICADE DEFENDERS
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR

LES MISÉRABLES



#30

ANGEL PANTINE / FINALE
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#29

MADAME THIENARDIER "WEDDING"
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#28

THIENARDIER "WEDDING"
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#23

JAVES 1-3 / 1822
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



#16

VALJEAN 3 / 1823
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



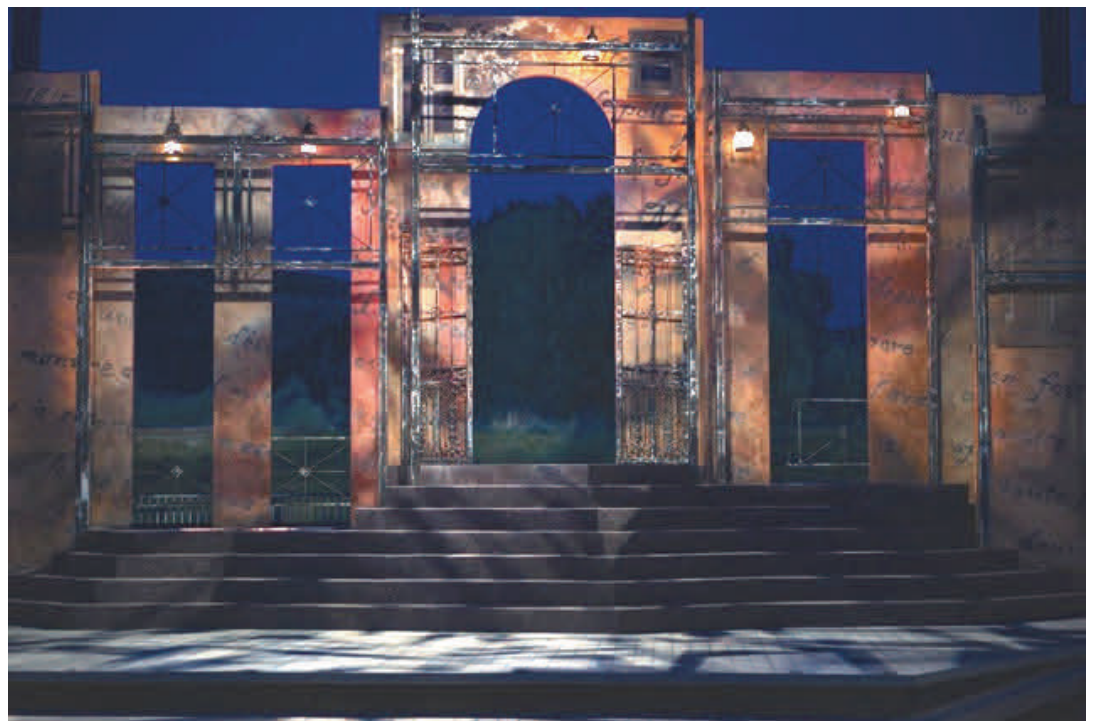
#26

COSETTE & MARIUS "WEDDING"
IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL/GREAT LAKES THEATER
VICTORIA BUSSERT - DIRECTOR



SCENIC DESIGN

BY JEFF HERRMANN





IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL'S PRODUCTION OF *LES MISÉRABLES*, NOW PLAYING AT GLT'S HANNA THEATRE



From top left: Stephen Mitchell Brown as JeanValjean; Jodi Dominick as Fantine; Tom Ford as Thénardier and company; Reilly Ramos as Cosette & Tracee Patterson as Madame Thénardier; Ian Gould as Jean Prouvaire, M.A. Taylor as Lesgles, Kyle Jean Baptiste as Enjolras, Brandyn Day as Feuilly & Lynn Robert Berg as Combeferre; Jodi Dominick as Fantine & Brandyn Day as Bamatabois.

From top left: Stephen Mitchell Brown as Jean Valjean & Claire Howes Eisentrout as Cosette; the company at the barricades; Claire Howes Eisentrout as Cosette & Pedar Benson Bate as Marius; Tom Ford as Thénardier & Tracee Patterson as Madame Thénardier; the company in the Finale.



IF YOU HAVE ONE DAY TO PREPARE

- Give students a brief summary of the history/background of the play (see below).
- Go over the synopsis of the play as well. The play is “operatic” and they may get all the words - so they will need to have an overview of the story line.
- Briefly discuss one or two of the following questions:
 1. 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?
 2. 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?
 3. A big question in this play is the plight of the poor. 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? As you see the play, think about what the opinion of Victor Hugo might be. How do you think poor people feel about the way they are treated?
 4. During the play students at the Barricade take the law into their own hands. Is such action ever justified? Why/why not?
 5. What is a value or a belief that you might fight for? How would you go about it?
 6. 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.' "
 7. 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?

Common Core Standards met with this lesson:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL -10-11-12.1.C Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL9-10.11-12.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL-9-10.-11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

Editor's note: This musical is so rich in history, music, and ideas that I hope you will be able to spend more than one day with it. Perhaps a day on history/background, a day on themes, and a day on theater-related activities. You and your students will be richly rewarded if this is possible.

VICTOR HUGO'S FRANCE

French Revolution 1789

Born in 1802, Hugo grew up in a France attempting to re-define itself. The French Revolution of 1789 had toppled centuries of royal rule and created France's first Republic, with hopes of increased freedoms and social advances for the poor. But years of chaos followed (including the "Reign of Terror" when close to 40,000 people were beheaded) as moderate and radical activists battled each other for power.

From 1799 - 1848, Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and then three kings ruled France. This created much governmental upheaval and political division. Hugo's views changed from writings full of admiration for royalty to writings that were sometimes censored by the royal government. His great novel *Les Misérables* was met with mixed critical reviews. Many people thought his ideas were too emotional and romantic, especially since France was more conservative and had not yet adopted the "romantic" thought characterized by artists such as Beethoven, William Wordsworth, J.M.W. Turner, and Hugo, who examined the depth of human emotion and celebrated the natural world.

19th Century Revolutions in Technology, Thought, Culture, and Politics - Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution, with its breakthroughs in technology and large-scale manufacturing, massively impacted the workforce and how people lived their daily lives in the 19th century. Among the changes:

- invention of the railroad transformed the speed at which people and information could travel within and between countries.
- populations mushrooming in the cities.
- filthy and overcrowded cities
- governments just beginning to embrace advances in urban planning, mass transit, and public health to make cities more livable

Revolutions of thought were sweeping across Europe:

- philosophers such as Karl Marx introduced new ideological concepts that emphasized the individual's role in determining his/her own rights and freedoms.
- artists were breaking away from classical structures to look deeply into the human condition.
- The Romantic movement, characterized by artists such as Beethoven, William Wordsworth, J.M.W. Turner, and Victor Hugo, examined the depth of human emotion and celebrated the natural world.

These revolutions in economy, thought and culture had political reverberations throughout the continent, as old ruling and class structures were shaken up.

- The year 1848 saw the largest wave of revolutions in the history of the world (in countries including Austria, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Prussia, and Denmark).
- In nearly all the countries new governments were established. In a matter of years many countries had returned to their previous governments; however, the revolutions had given hope to people outside the ruling classes that change was possible, and put in motion waves of progress.
- By the 1870s, many European countries had established new constitutions and increased voting rights.

IF YOU HAVE 3-5 DAYS TO PREPARE

Quick Activity for further exploration of "background information."

1. Have students read the information, "History/background of Victor Hugo's France."

Then in small groups prepare brief (5 minutes) reports to the rest of the class that give examples of these historical events. Perhaps they have read books, plays, or poetry about some of these things.

They could also look up examples of things happening in the U.S. during this same time period as a way of comparing these events.

They could also simply respond to the events, comparing them with our current political struggles concerning the "working poor."

2. Combine the above activity with work from the quotes below.

Have students choose a quote they like and explain it in their own words.

Then ask students to go to either side of the room to "agree" or "disagree" with the quote.

Follow with discussion.

3. Play the beginning music from a soundtrack of the play. Ask students to visualize what is happening as they listen to the music.

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.

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*?

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 the United States. 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?

-
- 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

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?
- Would you consider the election of President Obama revolutionary? Why or why not?
- 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?

Common Core Standards met with this lesson:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

INVESTIGATING THEMATIC ELEMENTS

There are a few main kinds of themes (sometimes called archetypes), which can be perceived as occurring in all types of literature that exist currently. It is possible for more than one theme to be present in one book or play. Look at the following thematic ideas. Which ones do you recognize from *Les Misérables*?

- **The Great Journey:** This follows a character or characters through a series of episodic adventures as they travel. It may be a sad story or a happy story, or it may even be comedic. *Huckleberry Finn*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and *The Odyssey* are good examples.
- **Loss of Innocence:** Sometimes called the “coming of age story,” this most commonly introduces an “innocent” character to the evil or complexity of the real/adult world. In literature, we might look at *David Copperfield* or most of the Nick Adams stories by Ernest Hemingway, like “Indian Camp” and “The End of Something.”
- **The Noble Sacrifice:** The sacrifice can be for any reason except self—a loved one, an enemy, a group of people, the whole of humanity, a dog—but the bottom line is that the protagonist sacrifices himself or herself in an effort to save others. In literature, this is demonstrated in the story of Jesus in the New Testament and King Arthur in Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*.
- **The Great Battle:** *The Iliad* and *A Tale of Two Cities* are classic examples of this theme. It is about people or groups of people in conflict. It is sometimes a good vs. evil story like *1984* by George Orwell, but not always. In theatre, we see this theme at work in *West Side Story* and *Les Misérables*. We often see this theme in horror or science fiction, where the antagonist—a monster/creature/human/alien/computer/etc.—is trying to kill the protagonist, who must fight to stay alive and/or defeat the antagonist. Sub-categories would be person vs. person, person vs. nature, person vs. society, person vs. technology and etc.
- **Love and Friendship:** *Romeo and Juliet* is a classic love story, as is the story of Lancelot and Guenivere. The ending may be happy, sad, or bittersweet, but the main theme is romantic love. Also included in this theme is platonic love—friendship. All romance novels, whether straight or gay, fit into this category as well as “buddy tales” like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

Les Misérables is one of the most widely read novels of all time, and the musical based on the book 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): *Hamlet*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Great Expectations*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Macbeth*, *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*?
- Relate the themes of *Les Misérables* to events occurring in your community, America, or the world today. After reading or seeing *Les Misérables*, describe how it has changed the way you think about these events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.R.9-10.11-12.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.11-12.3 Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

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?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

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*.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

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.”

Some Common Core Standards Met in these activities

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.5

Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grades 11-12 Language standards 1 and 3 [here](#) for specific expectations.)

Sources:

Teacher Guide compiled by Madelon Horvath

Sources:

Utah Shakespeare Festival,
351 West Center Street
Cedar City, Utah 84720

Theater Under the Stars
"TUTS" 800 Bagby, Suite 200
Houston, TX 77002

Center Theatre Group Educator Resource
Ahmanson Theatre, Mark Taper Forum,
Kirk Douglas Theatre
601 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Les Misérables Study Guide by Peter Royson and
Sarah Schlesinger, layout and design by Allen L.
Hubby

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's 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 Thénardiens 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.

NOTES

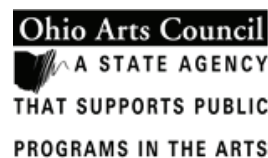
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ABOUT GREAT LAKES THEATER



Charles Fee, Producing Artistic Director

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, offering an annual series of student matinees and, for over 30 years, an acclaimed school residency program led by teams of specially trained actor-teachers.

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