

The Hunchback of Notre Dame Study Guide

The Hunchback of Notre Dame by Victor Hugo

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Introduction

By the time Victor Hugo wrote *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (published in French as *Notre-Dame de Paris*), he had already made a name for himself as a poet and dramatist. Although he had written one other novel (*Han d'Islande*, 1823), he had not really been known as a novelist. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was to change all that. Even more popular than it became throughout the twentieth century and into the early 2000s, this romantic story grabbed the imagination of the French people who embraced it for its melodramatic storyline and Hugo's detailed rendering of the life and culture of fifteenth-century Paris.

On the surface, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is a story of unrequited love between a man horribly disfigured and a beautiful woman who loves someone else. But Hugo was a very complex writer who gave his readers a much more complicated story. Underneath the unfolding of Quasimodo's love of La Esmeralda is a historical drama set in 1482, a time that in many ways mirrored the times and political struggles of Hugo's nineteenth-century world. With almost the entire novel set in the cathedral of Notre Dame, the novel also conveys a spiritual element not only in its setting but in its characters. There is a priest who has lost his spiritual path; there is a physically disfigured man who is shunned and must find solace not in the material world but deep within himself; and there is the beautiful woman, innocence personified, who searches for a spiritual form of love.

Although his contemporaries applauded his novel, in many ways Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was also shocking in its time. Hugo was, after all, a central figure of the Romantic Movement in literature. Readers, prior to Hugo's works, were used to literature that was influenced more by the classical form, which emphasized rational rather than emotional topics and points of view. Also, Hugo's main character, Quasimodo, is physically repulsive, whereas in classical works, writers focused on idealized form. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* also focuses on the personal rather than on classical universal themes, which may be one of the reasons why the novel retained its popularity for almost two hundred years.



Author Biography

Victor Hugo was one of the most influential of early French Romantic writers, a man who so dominated French literature that the French refer to the nineteenth century as the century of Victor Hugo. He was born in Besançon on February 26, 1802, the third son of Leopold, an apparently ruthless soldier who rose in rank to general, and Sophia, who because she was unhappily married, eventually separated from Leopold and took her children to Paris where she raised them. Hugo turned to poetry early in life and by the age of seventeen was, with the help of his brothers, publishing a magazine, *Conservateur Littéraire*. Three years later, he had published a collection of poems that gained the attention of, as well as a royal pension from, King Louis XVIII. By the time he was thirty, his name was both well known and well respected.

Much involved with the new literary movement, Hugo was one of a group of writers who argued against French classicism and in favor of French romanticism. Eighteenth-century classicism was a more conservative movement that emphasized the art and literature of ancient Greece and Rome and valued form tightly regulated by rules; nineteenth-century French romanticism, on the other hand, valued the emotional and more personal experience, as demonstrated in many of Hugo's works, especially *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. After marrying Adele Fucher, his childhood sweetheart, in 1822, Hugo's house became the meeting place for the early French romantic writers. The couple eventually had four children.

Between 1826 and 1843, Hugo experienced a great rush of creativity, producing three novels, numerous essays, and five volumes of poems, as well as many dramatic pieces. However, tragedy struck in 1843, when his daughter and her husband died, draining Hugo of inspiration and initiating a long period in which he did not write.

Then in 1851, after Napoleon III seized full power, Hugo, who was a strong proponent of democracy, feared for his life and left Paris with his mistress Juliette Drouet and lived in exile for almost twenty years. He returned to Paris in 1870, after the fall of the Second Empire and was elected a senator of the Third Republic six years later.

Hugo continued to write despite his political activities and the deaths of his wife, his mistress, and his sons. His health slowly declined and in 1878, Hugo suffered a stroke. Then on May 22, 1885, he died. The people of Paris honored him by coming out in the millions for his funeral. He was given a national funeral and was buried in the Pantheon. As Laurence M. Porter in his book *Victor Hugo* describes him, as "a master of the lyric poem, the novel, the theater, and the essay, deeply committed to social reform, and the major symbol of resistance to Napoleon III's empire, Hugo became a national monument during his lifetime." After his death, Hugo's life works were collected in a forty-five-volume edition.



Plot Summary

Chapters 1—11

Hugo begins *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* with a detailed account of the life and culture of fifteenth-century Paris. There is to be a royal wedding, and the city is alive with performances and pomp. One of the main characters is introduced in the person of Pierre Gringoire, a poet and playwright, whose drama is presented amidst noise and many interruptions.

One of those interruptions is caused by La Esmeralda, a woman whose beauty attracts crowds and cheers. After the play is finally abandoned, Gringoire follows La Esmeralda, watches her dance, and later witnesses Quasimodo attempting to kidnap her. Claude Frollo has prompted Quasimodo to take the woman back to the cathedral. When Gringoire tries to rescue La Esmeralda, Quasimodo hits him and knocks him out. In the meantime, the handsome captain of the king's archers, Phoebus, arrests Quasimodo as Frollo sneaks away.

Chapters 12—20

Gringoire searches for a place to sleep and ends up with the gypsies, whose leader Clopin Trouillefou threatens to kill him unless a woman in their midst agrees to marry him. La Esmeralda, who recognizes Gringoire, agrees to save him. After they are married, La Esmeralda tells him she wants only a platonic relationship. Gringoire accepts but secretly hopes that one day he will win her love.

Hugo then describes the cathedral of Notre Dame. Great details are provided about the church's history and its architecture. Next Hugo offers a broader view of fifteenth-century Paris, its buildings and its various centers. There is a flashback to the time when Quasimodo was abandoned as an infant and left in the church. The history of priest Frollo is then provided. Readers learn about Frollo's singular focus on an intellectual life as well as his concern for Quasimodo and for Frollo's younger brother Jehan, whose care Frollo undertook upon the death of their parents. Jehan has turned out to be a disappointment, and Frollo plans to do a better job with Quasimodo.

A fuller description is offered about Quasimodo's life, which is fairly well cloistered in the cathedral. Not being able to socialize because people are fearful of him, Quasimodo makes friends with the statues and the bells, which are his responsibility to ring on special occasions. The bells, however, have deafened him.

Chapters 21—30

King Louis XI makes a surprise visit (under disguise and using the name Compère Tourangeau) to Frollo, who has gained a reputation as a learned scholar not only in the



spiritual realm but also in medicine and alchemy. The king's physician, Jacques Coictier, does not trust Frollo and insists that Frollo is a madman. Frollo discusses the power of the new printing presses, which he suggests to the king will eventually undermine the authority of the church as well as diminish the other arts such as architecture, which in classical and medieval times was decorated to display in stone sculpture and relief the stories of ancient civilizations.

Then the scene changes to the trial of Quasimodo for having kidnapped La Esmeralda. The trial is led by Provost d'Estouteville and the deaf auditor Master Florian. When the crowd mocks both the auditor and Quasimodo for the coincidence of their deafness, Florian becomes indignant and eventually d'Estouteville sentences Quasimodo to a public beating. Because of his deafness Quasimodo does not sufficiently answer the provost's questions, thus leading the provost to believe that Quasimodo is being disrespectful. This scene demonstrates that the king's men are heartless, and the public is disgusted with their awkward authority.

The story of Pacquette, La Esmeralda's mother, is then told in flashback. Pacquette's mother was forced to raise her in poverty, and when her mother dies, Pacquette becomes pregnant and gives birth to a beautiful girl whom she names Agnes. Later, her child is stolen by the gypsies, and although Pacquette does not know it, they name her La Esmeralda.

The beating of Quasimodo then takes place. He is left on the platform after the beating, and the crowd throws stones at him. Quasimodo sees Frollo in the crowd and believes Frollo will save him. But the priest walks away. When Quasimodo begs for water, La Esmeralda steps forward to help him.

Spring arrives, and readers learn that Captain Phoebus has been matched up with Demoiselle Fleur de Lys, who happens to notice Phoebus's attraction to La Esmeralda. Demoiselle Fleur de Lys suggests that Phoebus invite La Esmeralda to the party they are going to. Once there, La Esmeralda receives too much attention from all the men, and the women become jealous. Frollo, also attracted to La Esmeralda, goes to Gringoire and asks about her. Gringoire tells Frollo that La Esmeralda is in love with Phoebus.

Chapters 31—40

Frollo overhears Phoebus talking about La Esmeralda and convinces Phoebus to let him join him as Phoebus plans to meet her. They enter a house, and Phoebus locks Frollo in a closet. Frollo finds a hole in the closet and watches Phoebus and La Esmeralda embrace and kiss. This infuriates Frollo, and he breaks out of the closet, stabs Phoebus, and leaves. La Esmeralda faints. When she awakens, she cradles Phoebus in her arms believing he is dead. La Esmeralda is arrested, put on trial, and tortured for killing him. After her torture, she signs a confession and is sentenced to death. Frollo comes to visit her and tells her he loves her and can save her if she chooses him. He also tells her that Phoebus is dead. La Esmeralda refuses Frollo and



says she is ready to die. As she is led outside, she sees Phoebus and faints. Quasimodo steals her away and takes her into the cathedral. There is a law that allows people asylum, or protection from secular law, so long as they take sanctuary in a church, so no one can take her.

Chapters 41—50

Frollo cannot stand to watch the execution of La Esmeralda, so he has not witnessed her rescue. But when he returns to the cathedral and sees the shape of a woman and a goat walking in the shadows of the towers, he thinks he is seeing a ghost. The scene then focuses on Quasimodo and his care of La Esmeralda. Quasimodo brings her clothing and food and tells her of his feelings. La Esmeralda can barely stand to look at him, although she does recognize the warmth of his heart. Later, she sees Phoebus and asks Quasimodo to go and bring him back to her. Quasimodo tries, but Phoebus will not come. La Esmeralda is visibly disappointed, which hurts Quasimodo even further. He knows that Phoebus does not deserve La Esmeralda's love.

Frollo finally realizes La Esmeralda is in the cathedral and seeks her out. He pleads once again for her to love him and forces himself on her. Quasimodo pulls Frollo away and refuses to leave when Frollo commands him. Instead Quasimodo offers Frollo his knife, telling him he will protect La Esmeralda until he dies. Frollo leaves, muttering that no one will have La Esmeralda. Frollo goes to Gringoire, tells him the king's men are planning to take La Esmeralda out of the cathedral in three days, He asks Gringoire to help him rescue La Esmeralda. Gringoire enlists the help of the gypsies. They march toward the cathedral under the cover of night, but Quasimodo spies them. He throws wooden beams, rocks, and molten metal at them. Many are killed but the group persists.

Chapters 51—57

King Louis hears that the citizens are revolting against him. He orders his men to capture and hang them all. He also orders La Esmeralda's immediate execution because he is told she is the reason the people are revolting. The king's men, led by Phoebus, force the gypsies to retreat. Quasimodo thinks he is safe now and turns to look for La Esmeralda, but she is gone. Unbeknownst to Quasimodo, Gringoire and Frollo (in disguise) have taken her away. Gringoire disappears after they take La Esmeralda outside the cathedral. Frollo once again reminds La Esmeralda that her life is in his hands and begs her to love him once again. La Esmeralda again refuses, so Frollo takes her back into the cathedral and locks her in the tower cell with Pacquette (Sister Gudule). As the women talk, they unfold their stories and realize they are mother and daughter. When soldiers come to take La Esmeralda away, her mother hides her. But La Esmeralda hears Phoebus' voice and comes out of her hiding place, still believing he loves her. Instead, Phoebus takes her away. Fighting to save her daughter, Pacquette bites the other officer. He knocks her away, and she hits her head and dies with La Esmeralda watching.



Quasimodo searches for La Esmeralda but only finds Frollo, whom he follows up the tower. Frollo stares out over the city as does Quasimodo and that is when he sees La Esmeralda being hanged. He hears Frollo laugh at her death and lifts Frollo up and throws him over the edge to his death.

Hugo then sums up the lives of the remaining characters. The king dies; Phoebus marries; and Gringoire becomes a famous writer. Quasimodo is later found in the cemetery vault where La Esmeralda was buried. He is recognizable only by the twisted skeleton of his form. His bones are intertwined in a death embrace with those of a female skeleton.



Characters

Jacques Coictier

Coictier is the king's physician who accompanies the king to visit Frollo to ask him about his medical knowledge.

Jacques Coppenole

Coppenole is a hosier who travels with the royal party from Brussels. Although he is a mere maker of hoses, he is announced as if he too were royalty. Coppenole has a way with the crowds in the opening of the novel, giving the reader a contrast between how the populace related to royalty and how royalty related to them, emphasizing the gap between them. Coppenole is the bridge. It is Coppenole who also suggests the election of the pope of fools, which introduces Quasimodo.

Robert d'Estouteville

Robert d'Estouteville is the provost of Paris and presides over the trial of Quasimodo, finally sentencing him to a severe public beating.

Demoiselle Fleur de Lys

Demoiselle Fleur de Lys is the betrothed of Captain Phoebus. When she notices that Phoebus is interested in La Esmeralda's dancing, she suggests that he invite La Esmeralda to the party they are going to. At the party, La Esmeralda becomes the center of attraction with all the men, making all the women jealous.

Master Florian

Florian, the king's auditor, is deaf like Quasimodo. The crowd finds the shared deafness hilarious, which makes Florian indignant. When he demonstrates his annoyance, Provost d'Estouteville blames Quasimodo and sentences him to a beating.

Claude Frollo

Claude Frollo is the priest (later becoming the archdeacon at Notre Dame) who adopts Quasimodo. He starts off as a somewhat softhearted individual who not only cares for Quasimodo but also Frollo's orphaned younger brother Jehan. But as time passes Frollo's heart hardens, and his pursuit of knowledge does not completely fulfill him. He is somewhat an outcast himself, having spent most of his youth studying. His adoption



of Quasimodo draws him further away from other people, who think Quasimodo is related to the devil.

Frollo finds himself distracted by his lust for La Esmeralda. He has Quasimodo kidnap La Esmeralda in a desperate attempt to conquer her. Then he demonstrates his lack of morals when he allows the authorities to punish Quasimodo for the crime that Frollo technically perpetrated. When Frollo realizes that no matter what he does, he cannot possess La Esmeralda because the only man she wants is Phoebus, Frollo stabs Phoebus and allows, once again, someone else to be punished for his crime; this time it is La Esmeralda who must suffer. After Quasimodo helps La Esmeralda escape from being hanged, Frollo employs Gringoire to help him take La Esmeralda away from Quasimodo's protection. Frollo then turns La Esmeralda over to the king's authorities and laughs when La Esmeralda is hanged. This outrages Quasimodo, who then throws Frollo out of the tower. The character of Frollo is the most complex, filled with contradictions. He raises orphans but allows others to be punished for his crimes. He is a priest, who should be committed to purity and devotion, but he lusts after La Esmeralda and is the cause of her death.

Jehan Frollo

Jehan is the younger brother of Claude Frollo. Upon their parents' deaths, Claude takes upon himself the raising of his younger orphaned brother, hoping that Jehan will become scholarly. Jehan does not, thus disappointing his brother. Jehan lives with the gypsies and constantly begs for money from his brother. However, his brother's caring for Jehan represents the softer side of Claude.

Pierre Gringoire

Gringoire is a poet and dramatist, who was orphaned and later educated by Claude Frollo. It is with Gringoire's play that Hugo opens his story. Gringoire is not a successful playwright by any means. His play is scarcely even listened to. He wanders the streets in search of food and a place to sleep and ends up in a sanctuary of gypsies, who threaten to kill him unless one of the females agrees to marry him. La Esmeralda comes to Gringoire's rescue but after the marriage ceremony is performed lets Gringoire know that their relationship will never amount to more than that of brother and sister.

Sister Gudule

See *Paquette La Chantfleurie*

Pacquette La Chantfleurie

Pacquette, as a young mother, has her baby stolen from her. In her baby's place, she is given Quasimodo, whom she abandons in the church. Pacquette's baby was stolen



from her by a band of gypsies, and she finds out toward the end of the novel that her baby is none other than La Esmeralda. Pacquette's sorrow drives her crazy, and she is locked up in Rolande's Tower where she takes the name Sister Gudule. Later, Frollo locks La Esmeralda in the same cell in Rolande's Tower with Pacquette. While they share the cell, Pacquette and La Esmeralda discover they are mother and daughter. When the soldiers come to take La Esmeralda away, Pacquette fights to keep her daughter with her. In the process, one of the soldiers knocks her away, killing her.

La Esmeralda

La Esmeralda is the physical antithesis of Quasimodo. She is so beautiful crowds form around her just so they can see her walk by. Despite this physical disparity, La Esmeralda and Quasimodo have much in common. They are both outcasts (Quasimodo because of his physical infirmities and La Esmeralda because of her lack of proper standing in the community) and they both have pure hearts. They are also individuals who reach out to others in time of need. Both are depicted as innocents, people who are filled with complete trust, often even blinded by it.

La Esmeralda, like Quasimodo, knows little of her parentage. She was stolen by Egyptian gypsies when she was a baby. But unlike Quasimodo, La Esmeralda, as she matures into full womanhood, loves to be around people. People respond to her in positive ways. Because of her beauty, men cannot help but want her for their own. Gringoire falls in love with her for her beauty. Frollo and Phoebus lust after her. And Quasimodo falls in love with her for her generous heart. But La Esmeralda wants only Phoebus. She thinks only he can give her the love that she craves. After Frollo stabs Phoebus, La Esmeralda is left with his body. When the king's authorities arrive, she is accused of the crime and sentenced to death. Quasimodo saves her by stealing her away, but Frollo eventually turns her in. She is hanged for the crime. La Esmeralda affects many of the characters in this novel, but her character is not well developed. She enters the story and leaves it unchanged—beautiful and innocent.

King Louis XI

King Louis, the reigning monarch, visits Frollo to find out how much he knows about medicine. After interviewing him, the king is satisfied that Frollo knows what he is talking about and decides to study under him.

Captain Phoebus

Phoebus is the captain of the king's army, a handsome man who seduces women, including La Esmeralda. In a desperate act of jealousy, Frollo stabs Phoebus, leaving La Esmeralda with the bleeding body and allowing La Esmeralda to be charged with the crime. Unknown to La Esmeralda, Phoebus does not die but actually heals from his wounds and is later responsible for arresting a band of gypsies, which includes La Esmeralda.



Quasimodo

Quasimodo is the hunchback, a man so disfigured that many people believe he is no less than the devil. He is abandoned in the church by his mother who cannot confront his ugliness and is taken under the care of Claude Frollo, one of the priests. To keep him busy, Quasimodo (whose name is given him because he is left in the church on Quasimodogeniti Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter), is given the task of ringing the bells of Notre Dame, a task that eventually causes him to go deaf.

Quasimodo is totally devoted to Frollo, the only person who befriends him. Therefore, when Frollo asks him to kidnap La Esmeralda, Quasimodo does so without hesitation. He later suffers the punishment for this crime, surprised and totally dejected that Frollo does not come to his aid. When La Esmeralda shows affection toward him, Quasimodo falls madly in love with her and proves that he will do anything for her by saving her from a death sentence for a crime she has not committed. Then he takes her into the cathedral and shelters her. At one point Quasimodo must choose between his first love, Frollo, and his love for La Esmeralda when Frollo attempts to rape her. Quasimodo turns against his first master and saves the woman he loves. In the end, however, Quasimodo is incapable of protecting her. When he realizes that Frollo is the cause of her death, he throws Frollo from one of the cathedral towers. Quasimodo then realizes that the only two people he ever loved are dead, and he dies in the vault of Mountfaucon, holding onto the dead body of La Esmeralda. Quasimodo is the so-called beast in this story but only on a physical level. His beauty lies within, in his love and in his loyalty.

Compère Tourangeau

See King Louis XI

Clopin Trouillefou

Clopin appears in the opening scene of the novel as a beggar who climbs one of the pillars and cries out for alms. He fakes infirmities in order to attract more charity. Later, readers learn that Trouillefou is the leader of the band of gypsies of which La Esmeralda is a member. He calls himself the King of Thunes. Trouillefou in his capacity as leader threatens to kill Gringoire, stating that he can only be saved if a female gypsy agrees to marry him. La Esmeralda accepts the bid.



Themes

Abandonment

The theme of abandonment plays out in different ways in Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. The most obvious is the abandonment of Quasimodo by his mother, who steals the more beautiful child, La Esmeralda, and exchanges her malformed son, who is left in the halls of the cathedral. And that is just the beginning of abandonment in Quasimodo's life. The public abandons him in many ways, mocking and jeering him every time he appears outside his cloistered shelter. In more subtle ways, some of his physical senses also abandon him, leaving him without the power to hear or speak, pushing him deeper into isolation.

The priest Frollo and his brother Jehan are also abandoned by the death of their parents; as is Gringoire, another orphan in this story. On another level, all the poor of Paris are portrayed as having also been abandoned by the fabulously rich monarchy which has grown out of touch not only with the needs of the poverty stricken populous but with its subjects' humanity. This theme of abandonment makes the loyalty of Quasimodo and La Esmeralda all the more intense by contrast.

Physical Appearance

The theme of the power of physical appearance in affecting others is played out at its fullest in the characters of Quasimodo and La Esmeralda. Quasimodo is scorned, mocked, abandoned, ridiculed, and beaten for having been born in a twisted body. Whereas La Esmeralda is loved, lusted after, praised, and celebrated for her innate beauty. It is, however, interesting to note that neither Quasimodo's ugliness nor La Esmeralda's beauty grants a better outcome. Although Quasimodo must seek refuge in isolation because of his physical appearance, La Esmeralda suffers from the jealousy of others when she exhibits herself in public.

Disguise of one's physical appearance is also used throughout Hugo's story. Frollo often tries to disguise himself either in a common cloak or in the clothing of his priesthood. His cloak is used to give him an advantage in getting closer to La Esmeralda, who has resolved to resist him. But his priestly habit, if one takes the highest ideals of spirituality that his religious outfit represents, also disguises Frollo's carnal lust.

Obsession

There are many men who want to be close to La Esmeralda. Each man has his own reasons. Of all of them, Quasimodo and Frollo have the strongest desires, and those desires are born from opposite feelings. Quasimodo is sincerely in love with La Esmeralda. He demonstrates this by his ability to satisfy her needs without receiving anything in return. He wants to be able to look at her, but he turns his head so she will



not have to see his ugliness. He serves her and then leaves her alone. He protects her although he knows that she does not love him.

By contrast, Frollo is obsessed with La Esmeralda. Or more precisely, he is obsessed with the thought of her. He really does not know her. He is merely aroused by her beauty, by her female form, how she moves, how she laughs, and as a result he wants to own her. His obsession drives him away from his own rational thoughts and his vows of spirituality. His lofty ideals are corrupted by his carnal desires, and he will do anything, even break his God's commandments, to possess her. His obsession controls his body and his mind, pointing him in the direction of the darkest evil rather than toward the spiritual light. He, who is dressed in the garb of the priest, Hugo seems to be saying, is really the devil. While Quasimodo, who has been accused of being the devil because of his physical garb, is more like a saint.

Intolerance

Intolerance abounds in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. The most obvious is the intolerance that surrounds Quasimodo. From his birth to his death, people cannot bear to look at him let alone to be around him without mocking him. Even when he is in a court of law, the judge is so prejudiced by Quasimodo's looks, he has no tolerance of Quasimodo's inability to hear and therefore to express himself. The judge mistakenly believes that Quasimodo is acting disrespectfully instead of realizing that Quasimodo's communication skills are limited.

The king also demonstrates intolerance when he hears there is an uprising among his people. He, as well as the people who report to him, believe that the uprising is against the king. Rather than attempting to find out why the people are revolting, the king, almost like the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*, in essence shouts out, Off with their heads. There is also the general intolerance against the gypsies who are accused of every crime from theft to sorcery, whether or not they have committed them.

Betrayal

Quasimodo portrays the most sincere form of loyalty and is therefore the most sympathetic character to experience betrayal. Since Frollo is the only person who shows any signs of affection toward him, Quasimodo would do anything for his master. Frollo asks him to kidnap La Esmeralda, and Quasimodo does so, neither understanding the motives nor the consequences. But when Quasimodo is tried and convicted of a crime whose penalty is a severe beating, he does comprehend that he does not deserve that punishment. He is not the perpetrator of that crime, since he has only followed the dictates of his beloved Frollo. But Frollo's loyalty is nowhere near as exemplary as Quasimodo's, and although he sees his adopted child suffering unjustly, Frollo does not come to Quasimodo's defense.

Moreover, it is Frollo again, who exhibits another lethal form of betrayal in another circumstance, this time with La Esmeralda, when he stabs Phoebus and allows La



Esmeralda to pay with her life for this crime. Phoebus, too, is guilty of betrayal when he pretends to love La Esmeralda only to win a few hours of physical passion. He watches as La Esmeralda is about to be hanged for a crime that he knows she did not commit. La Esmeralda, herself, or rather her blind love of Phoebus, betrays her own safety when she comes out of hiding upon hearing Phoebus' voice. Believing Phoebus loves her, she in essence turns herself in to those who want to see her dead.



Style

Gothic Novel

Typically, a gothic novel includes a dark setting preferably in an old castle; tension created through suspense; the appearance of mysterious signs that act as warnings or prophecy; the stirring of strong emotions; and of course a threatened woman in need of rescue. Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* contains all of these elements and more. First there is the gothic cathedral of Notre Dame with its castle-like structure and embellishments of gargoyles, dark shadowy staircases, towers, and hidden rooms. This setting emphasizes mystery and foreboding. Then there is the constant flow of emotions, including despair, brief happiness, surprise, shock, disappointment, and fear. Finally there is La Esmeralda, the beautiful woman in distress.

Hugo also includes elements of the irrational, such as sorcery, black magic, alchemy, obsession, and devilry. He even adds a bit of prophecy or omen when he has Frollo write the word *ANAGRA* on the wall of his room. The word means fate and reflects both the gripping effects from which the characters appear unable to free themselves as well as the derivative form of the word, which is fatality, thus making the word a prophecy of the short time remaining for Hugo's main characters. As in other gothic novels, mystery abounds in Hugo's novel, too, from the unknown parentages of many of the characters to the motivation of Frollo who seems bent on fouling the lives of Quasimodo and La Esmeralda. The overwhelming power of the male is also present, another gothic ingredient. From the king, who has the power to execute anyone who disagrees with his thoughts, to Phoebus, who takes what pleasure he can find in women without caring about them in return, to Frollo, who exerts his power over both Quasimodo and La Esmeralda.

Tragedy

If one were to sum up the overall theme of Hugo's novel, it would be easy to refer to it as a melodramatic tragedy. A tragedy is a work that shows a conflict between an individual and a higher force that ends badly for the individual. There is the tragic form of Quasimodo that makes his life a living hell. There is the tragic figure of La Esmeralda, whose beauty should have given her easy access to a life of love but instead gives her nothing but disappointment and suffering. In Frollo, readers witness a tragic flaw—his inability to control his lust—which eventually destroys his life. The tragedy of poverty is also provided in regard to the masses of people going hungry while grand feasts and opulence of every kind are enjoyed inside the monarch's hall. And then there is Pacquette, who is driven mad after the theft of her beautiful baby girl, only to be reunited with her in the last moments of both of their lives. The book ends with misguided, bloody battles, murders, and executions, and the most tragic image of all—that of Quasimodo's skeletal remains wrapped around his dead beloved.



Privileging the Outcast

Quasimodo reflects the romantic tendency to privilege the outcast (the ugly, powerless, common) while discounting the heads of hierarchy. In a sense, Quasimodo is something of the "noble savage," one who exhibits higher virtue and greater compassion than the so-called leaders of the society, a figure that appears repeatedly in nineteenth-century romantic literature.

Complexity and Elaboration

Hugo's style is filled with very long, highly descriptive passages. For instance, he might, in the midst of describing a scene, point out the curvatures of scroll-topped columns in the architecture of the room in which the scene is being played out. He also provides long digressions about the history of a building or a place. Extended flashbacks present backgrounds for some characters, and some chapters are devoted to his personal philosophies, such as the discussion on the potential effect of the printing presses. He describes the cathedral of Notre Dame in fine detail, as well as the buildings in the surrounding area and the view of the city from one of the cathedral's towers. Modern readers may be impatient with this elaborate style, accustomed as they are to quick camera shots in movies and the scaled down writing of popular twentieth-century and early 2000s narrative styles. But it is through Hugo's extensive details that readers are given a deeper understanding of the life and times of fifteenth-century Paris. His attention to detail provides a lot of information beyond the plot of the novel, particularly regarding the setting, background, and fifteenth-century topics.



Historical Context

King Louis XI

Louis XI (1423—1483) was king (he was crowned in 1461) during the time of Hugo's novel *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. His reign was characterized by diminished prestige of the courts, intervention in the affairs of the church, and imposition of heavy taxes to support a powerful army. Louis XI tended to turn away from nobility, preferring the common man in his ranks. The nobility, in turn, tried several times to dethrone him. But the lesser gentry and the bourgeois classes, with whom Louis had won favor, refused to revolt against him. His reign, however, was filled with battles for land and power. He had many political enemies, many of whom were imprisoned in very poor conditions for long periods. In the latter years of his reign, Louis feared for his life. He sensed he might be assassinated. For this reason, during the last two years of his monarchy, Louis hid, in self-exile, in Touraine. He died in 1483 of cerebral arteriosclerosis. He was succeeded by his son, Charles VIII.

Cathedral of Notre Dame

Construction on the cathedral of Notre Dame was at least in the planning stages in 1160, when Maurice du Sully envisioned its design. The cornerstone was laid three years later. The original design was Romanesque. But the cathedral was built in three stages, and before it was completed, advances in architectural design allowed more freedom in how weight in large buildings could be supported and walls opened in to let in light. As construction continued, the cathedral design was increasingly affected by the new gothic style. This style can be seen in the ribbed vaults (arched ribs that support the nave ceiling) and flying buttresses (arched supports built outside the nave walls that direct the weight of the roof outward along the ribs and down the buttresses outside the church, thus relieving the foundation of weight and making possible a higher vault in the nave). Because the weight was channeled this way, the wall space between the buttresses could be opened up with stained glass windows. The gothic cathedral also had ornate spires and ornate exterior sculpture. On the roof top, sculpted gargoyles symbolically were intended to scare away devils but practically functioned as downspouts. The gothic style was magnificent, and under the financial support of King Louis VII, the cathedral located on an island in the Seine River, rose in grandeur, the pride of Paris. The church was completed between 1250 and 1300 but went through major reconstructions thereafter. Over the years, the cathedral was the site of many coronations and royal weddings.

During the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV (late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) some of the cathedral's tombs and stained glass windows were destroyed. At the end of the eighteenth century, revolutionaries plundered many of its valuables. Gradually the great building deteriorated, but major restoration programs in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries restored it.

Gypsies

The term gypsy was applied to a group of nomadic people, more properly known as Roma, who were believed, according to linguistic research, to have their origins in northwest India. There are historical records that indicate that the Roma lived in Arabic, Byzantine, and Persian countries as well as all over Europe. They first appeared in Europe in the 1400s. Wherever they went, they were considered outsiders and were often persecuted. Some countries enslaved them; others used them for entertainment, music and dancing being two of their gifts. Harsh laws against them often deterred their travels. In 1502, King Louis XII banished all gypsies from France. Even more severe, in Great Britain, Queen Elizabeth I (1533—1603) actually signed a law that stated gypsies could be hanged just for being gypsies. During the Nazi control of Germany, large groups of Roma were tortured and killed along with the Jewish population. Although people of Roma descent can be found all around the world, the largest populations of Roma are found in Russia and in Hungary.

Napoleon III

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808—1873) reigned during Hugo's life, and after returning from exile after the French Revolution of 1848, Napoleon III won the presidency and served as leader of the Second Republic. Then in 1851, he overthrew the Second Republic and gave himself dictatorial powers. A year later, he named himself ruler of France's Second Empire. He ruled France with a tight fist but also invested a lot of money in rebuilding the country. He was responsible for building railroads and authorizing the first banks. His strict rule led to his unpopularity among his citizens, so he attempted to liberalize his government, giving his general assembly broader powers. This measure did not, however, save him. His downfall resulted from his ambitions to be a great military leader, like his uncle, Napoleon I. In 1870, after taking to the battlefield during the Franco-Prussian war, he was captured by the Prussians and declared by his citizens at home to be dethroned by the then-authoritative powers of the Third Republic in Paris. Napoleon III died in exile in 1873 in Great Britain where he was buried.

Critical Overview

According to his biographer, Graham Robb, in his award-winning book *Victor Hugo*, "by the time he fled the country in 1851, Hugo was the most famous living writer in the world . . . His influence on French literature was second only to that of the Bible." Although Hugo's life's work included "seven novels, eighteen volumes of poetry, twenty-one plays," and as Robb writes, "approximately three million words of history, criticism, travel writing and philosophy," Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* retains the honor of being one of his two most famous works. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was very popular in France when it first came out despite the fact, as Robb states it, "the immediate effect on readers of the time was horror verging on intense pleasure." The book shocked Hugo's readers with its "extreme states," Robb concludes, which included those of poverty and ugliness as well as the evils of power and the consequences of extreme debauchery. Ironically, it was also these extreme states that made the book so popular. This popularity spread across Europe and the United States and soon tourists were flocking to Paris to visit the sites depicted in Hugo's novel. Many were disappointed at first, writes Robb, with the sad state of the old cathedral, which was in need of a major renovation. But when the literary tourists were shown the word *ANA&Ggr;KH* carved into the wall, some of their disappointment was allayed. They began to look at the cathedral as Hugo presents it in his novel.

A century and a half after its publication, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* retained its popular appeal, and, although not claimed as Hugo's best novel (*Les Miserables* usually claimed that prize), it was praised for Hugo's detailed account and description of the cathedral as well as a glimpse into fifteenth-century France culture. The novel was deeply embedded in twentieth-century French culture, and the popularity of the novel, no doubt, played a significant part in influencing the French government to finance a restoration of the cathedral. Its effect could also be seen in the many interpretations that movie producers give it about every thirty years. Popular all over the world, Hugo is especially revered in France. As his biographer, Laurence M. Porter, in his book *Victor Hugo*, explains, Hugo's writing has sometimes been referred to as simplistic because of his "dualistic rhetoric of light versus darkness," which implies an uncomplicated and noncomplex view of life. Although the characters in Hugo's novel may seem simplistic, Porter writes, closer study of his novels show that "[Hugo] repeatedly implies a cosmic vision deeper than the limited visions of his characters. Hugo finds a hidden God revealed not through the rites of a church but through nature and the human heart."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



Critical Essay #1

Hart has degrees in English and creative writing and is the author of several books. In this essay, Hart explores the role of La Esmeralda and the force she portrays in uniting the characters and moving the story forward.

There has been much discussion about the protagonist of Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and many believe that Quasimodo is the protagonist. After all, the title of the novel specifically refers to him. But other critics believe that the true focus is the cathedral of Notre Dame, pointing to the French title of this work, which is *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Whether Quasimodo or the cathedral is argued to be the protagonist or focus, it is quite clear that the ultimate motivating force in the plot is La Esmeralda. She is the spark that sets this story in motion and continually inspires the other characters to act out their roles.

The novel begins with a lot of commotion. The city is in the throes of a large celebration. There are parades and visiting dignitaries. There are parties and plays. But the action is scattered and constantly interrupted until one defining moment, when La Esmeralda makes her first appearance. Suddenly everyone's attention is focused as people run to the streets or to the windows and doorways of buildings calling out her name as she passes by. Her beauty and innocence draw their attention: the women wish they could be her and the men want her touch.

As she moves through the streets, she draws the story forward. Gringoire, the poet and playwright, follows her, taking readers along with him. Gringoire is driven to find out who this beautiful woman is and why she demands so much attention, pulling his audience away as they have more interest in her than in Gringoire's play. Gringoire soon becomes obsessed with this woman, whose magic turns out to be more than just her beauty. She also has the gift of music and dance, and she seems to have mesmerized a goat just as she has captivated those who watch her. Gringoire is the first to be struck and motivated by La Esmeralda. He tries to save her from the hunchback who attempts to kidnap her, and thus Hugo, through this gypsy beauty, pulls his readers into the next phase of the story.

Gringoire is later saved by La Esmeralda. She marries him, and it is through this marriage and her subsequent demand that her relationship with Gringoire remain platonic, that she neutralizes Gringoire. He becomes a shadow in the story, flitting in and out of the background, not to fully reappear until the end, when he becomes unknowingly a catalyst for La Esmeralda's death. The story continues without him, as it now focuses on Quasimodo who attempts to kidnap La Esmeralda. Quasimodo does not fully comprehend why he has been asked to do so, nor does he completely understand the consequences when he is caught. Quasimodo is the blind follower of his master's will. Frollo is, after all, the first person Quasimodo learns to love. But once Quasimodo sets his eyes on the beautiful La Esmeralda, and once he witnesses her gentle spirit (offset by Frollo's betrayal), when La Esmeralda offers Quasimodo water, he, like all others, has trouble taking his eyes off her. But Quasimodo, who has suffered



much rebuke because of his physical appearance, sees much deeper than La Esmeralda's surface beauty. He sees that she alone has looked at him (despite her repulsion of him) not solely as a beast but as a person who has physical needs. And it is through her gift of water that the story takes another turn. Up till now, Quasimodo has done as he has been told to do. But from now on, because of La Esmeralda's innocent heart, Quasimodo discovers thoughts and feelings all his own. He learns to act instead of to react. He will do what he concludes must be done. He will fight to the death to save his queen. In contrast to what La Esmeralda has done to Gringoire, quieting him and sending him to the back of the stage, she has brought Quasimodo to life. He, who has lived in seclusion, in silence, in the darkness and shadow of near nonexistence, has been pushed forward into the light through the power of La Esmeralda.

But the story has not yet progressed that far. Hugo has yet to fully expose the complete contradiction in Frollo caused by La Esmeralda. Frollo has existed on the food of thought. Frollo has not only committed his life to the intellect, he has surrendered his soul to the church. He has sworn to remain celibate as his religious vows dictate. His mind, throughout his adult life, has been focused on books and the care of two orphaned children. He is sought after as a master of reasoning and understanding. His knowledge far exceeds the dogma of his church; he studies medicine and science and alchemy. And yet, beneath the mantle of intellect is Frollo's Achilles heel, his mortal character flaw. Frollo melts at the sight of La Esmeralda. He not only is affected by her beauty, his passions for her controls his behavior. La Esmeralda has turned this great angel of intellect into a devil of lust. Because of his need of her, Frollo will abuse Quasimodo and will attempt to assassinate his rival Phoebus. He will lie, cheat, and scheme. In other words, because of La Esmeralda, Frollo is, along with the story, transformed.

It should be pointed out that La Esmeralda is powerful in spite of herself. Although her god-given beauty incites the characters of this novel and moves the story along, La Esmeralda herself lacks personal power. Or maybe this should be stated in another way. La Esmeralda has her own Achilles heel, her own point of weakness. She desires a perfect love. And her definition of perfect love comes to her in the form of Phoebus, a vain, shallow soldier, whose own beauty inflates his ego and overshadows his heart. Whether it is the handsomeness of this king's archer that captivates La Esmeralda or it is his rank, the young gypsy woman cannot see beyond what she thinks he is to the real dangers that he presents. He is the one she wants no matter how heartlessly he treats her. Thus La Esmeralda is blinded. But even in her weakest state, even in spite of herself, La Esmeralda exerts power. As ruthless as Phoebus is, how can he not be affected by the innocent La Esmeralda. He has no doubt wronged many women in his lifetime, but who among even the most cynical of men could watch the hanging of this woman, knowing that his voice of truth could save her life and not be affected by her innocence? Hugo writes that after La Esmeralda's death, Phoebus marries, but Hugo leaves undetermined the idea that the young couple lived happily ever after. There is another option available, one more plausible, one that rings more true. Phoebus, in his inability to speak out and save La Esmeralda, is a marked man. Let there be no doubt of the psychological consequences of his missed actions. Although Phoebus may witness



and maybe even cause, many deaths in his lifetime, La Esmeralda's will be the one that will haunt him for the rest of his life.

In the dramatic conclusion of this story, it is not through Frolo, in his vow to either have La Esmeralda or to destroy her, that the final turn in the story takes place. It is not really Phoebus, in his role of king's deputy, whose order it is to find La Esmeralda and bring her to the hangman's rope, who moves the novel to its final resting place. Even Quasimodo, in his deep love to save La Esmeralda, is helpless to shift the story from one path to another. And what about Gringoire? He does reappear, and he is instrumental in helping to bring the story to a conclusion, but his actions do not define the final swing. Rather, as in all other parts of the story, in all the other transitions, it is La Esmeralda who casts the final dice in determining how the story concludes. Whether one wants to portray La Esmeralda in the light of power or in the consequence of her weakness, it is for her unselfish love of Phoebus, her blind desire for a perfect love that this story takes its last turn. She has found her mother at last, and her mother, in the last few breaths of her life is determined to save her daughter—this child who was stolen from her and for whom the mother has grieved all of her life. The mother hides La Esmeralda, but La Esmeralda cannot hide from her lover. She cannot protect herself from the wrath of this man. She is willing to give him one more chance. She believes that his love of her is much greater than the love of her mother. La Esmeralda will offer herself to Phoebus, believing that he alone can save her. But she is mortally wrong.

And so the story takes its final turn. La Esmeralda has led the story along its path, turning and twisting its fate, persuading and evading its characters, challenging and tempting its motives from beginning to end. And in that end, she once again has a profound effect, not just on the storyline and the fictitious people who play out their created roles. This time, if in no other portion of the novel, La Esmeralda uses her power to affect readers. Even in death, after the flesh of her beauty has been eaten away, after her pure heart has shriveled out of sight and all that remains is her skeleton, La Esmeralda leaves her readers with a disturbing image that will revisit them and possibly drive them to visit Paris in irrational hopes of catching a glimpse of the dancing gypsy. Hugo gives La Esmeralda the last moment, demonstrating the power of this female character, who may not be the protagonist but without her the story would lack the energy to propel itself to the end. Who would not be moved by the final sight of Quasimodo's skeleton embracing his only true love, the giver of strength and inspiration of change? Of course, it is La Esmeralda.

Source: Joyce Hart, *Critical Essay on The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

The Hunchback of Notre Dame has been produced as a movie several times, first in 1923, starring Lon Chaney as Quasimodo; then in 1939, starring Charles Laughton as Quasimodo. In 1977, a British production starred Anthony Hopkins in the same role, and finally the Disney-made version appeared in 1996. There are books on tape, DVDs, and toys and games that use Hugo's original work as their inspiration.



Topics for Further Study

Write a research paper on the construction of the cathedral of Notre Dame. Include descriptions of the architectural designs and how they changed, as well as the effects on the cathedral of the wars that raged around it and the influences of the monarchies. Conclude with the status of the cathedral in the early 2000s.

Gypsies, or the Roma people, have been persecuted throughout their history. Write a paper about their struggles to exist in Europe, including a description of their background, culture, lifestyle, and music. Since there are various groups of the Roma, choose one particular section, such as the people who live in Hungary, as your focused topic.

Hugo was very much involved in politics. What political causes did he pursue? How did he engage in them in the political arena? What did he have to say about them in his writings, both in fiction and in nonfiction?

Hugo's play *Hernani, ou l'Honneur Castillan* was first produced in 1830 and is said to have dramatized the conflict between French classical authors and romantic ones. Read the play, then explain how these two literary philosophies are demonstrated in the play.



Compare and Contrast

1400s: France's civil war, referred to as the Hundred Years' War, begins in 1407.

1800s: Napoleon I, after victorious battles across Europe, establishing a vast French Empire, is defeated at Waterloo.

2000s: President Jacques Chirac refuses to join the coalition in support of the U.S. pre-emptive military strike on Iraq.

1400s: Anti-gypsy laws are enforced throughout most of Europe, making it a crime for the Roma people to live in such countries as Britain, Holland, and Germany. Spain tries gypsies as heretics.

1800s: Gypsies come to the United States to flee European discrimination, but many are turned back at Ellis Island.

2000s: Norway's largest religious group, the Lutherans, officially apologizes for its role in past discrimination against the gypsies.

1400s: The influence of Italian Renaissance art is imposed on French gothic architecture after Charles VIII returns from his conquest of Naples.

1800s: While King Louis XV (who is crowned when he is only five years old) matures, Phillippe d'Orleans supervises the French government and influences art and architecture in France with an emphasis on individualism.

2000s: Many modern French architects vow to renew Paris and its urban setting with buildings that break out of the box form and incorporate triangle shapes or a fragmented layout.

What Do I Read Next?

Some critics believe that Hugo's *Les Miserables* (1862) outshines *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. The book exposes the struggles of the underclass in France. It is interesting to note that the year this book was published, Hugo began financing a weekly dinner for fifty poor children, reflecting the sentiments he expresses in this story.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) focuses on a hideous-looking monster with fine feelings. The book is an example of the gothic horror novel.

Charles Dickens, a contemporary of Hugo, wrote *Oliver Twist* (1837), a novel that portrays the hardships of the poor in London. A poor orphaned boy escapes from his cruel master only to find life even more difficult on the streets.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886), one of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic works, features a well-mannered gentleman who struggles against his anti-social desires in this novel of two opposing forces fighting for the soul of one man.

Further Study

Baguley, David, *Napoleon III and His Regime: An Extravaganza*, Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

In this book, readers meet Napoleon III who dismantled France's republic and took it upon himself to establish a dictatorship. This nephew of the more famous Bonaparte lived in his uncle's shadow but tried desperately to outshine him.

Erlande-Brandenburg, Alain, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Harry N. Abrams, 1998.

Critics highly recommend a slow reading of this beautiful book that portrays the long history and the architectural accomplishments of one of the Middle Age's most magnificent buildings.

Kelly, Linda, *The Young Romantics: Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Vigny, Dumas, Musset, and George Sand and Their Friendships, Feuds, and Loves in the French Romantic Revolution*, Random House, 1976.

Kelly provides a good background study of the early authors of the French Romantic Movement.

Yors, Jan, *The Gypsies*, Waveland Press, 1989.

When he was only twelve years old, Jan Yors ran away from his home in Belgium and lived with a group of gypsies, following them from one country to another, learning their culture from the inside. This book has won praise from the critics for its first-hand account of life with one group of gypsies.

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Robb, Graham, *Victor Hugo: A Biography*, Norton, 1997.



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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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