

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

by Alexandre Dumas



THE AUTHOR

Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) was born in a small French village northeast of Paris. His father had been a general under Napoleon, and his paternal grandfather had lived in Haiti and had married a former slave woman there, thus making Dumas what was called a quadroon. Napoleon and his father had parted on bad terms, with Dumas' father being owed a large sum of money; the failure to pay this debt left the family poor and struggling, though the younger Dumas remained an admirer of the French emperor. Young Dumas moved to Paris in 1823 and took a job as a clerk to the Duke of Orleans (later to become King Louis Philippe), but soon began writing plays. Though his plays were successful and he made quite a handsome living from them, his profligate lifestyle (both financially and sexually) kept him constantly on the edge of bankruptcy. He played an active role in the revolution of 1830, and then turned to writing novels. As was the case with Dickens in England, his books were published in cheap newspapers in serial form. Dumas proved able to crank out popular stories at an amazing rate, and soon became the most famous writer in France. Among his works are *The Three Musketeers* (1844), *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1845), and *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1850). Dumas' novels tend to be long and full of flowery description (some cynics suggest that this is because he was paid by the word), and for this reason often appear today in the form of abridged translations (if you ever doubt the value of such an approach, take a look at the *unabridged* version of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* sometime). Dumas continued to churn out novels until 1867. In 1870, he suffered a stroke and died, having spent or given away almost all the millions of francs he had earned throughout a fabulous life that in many ways equaled the adventures in the stories he generated from his imagination. His illegitimate son Alexandre Dumas *fils* also became a famous writer, though he did not follow his father's exorbitant lifestyle.

Dumas was part of the French Romantic movement, which involved a reaction against the conservatism and orderliness of the Age of Reason. His stories are full of adventure and passion, and show a real love for the unique characteristics of French society. He favored democracy and hated despots. As an author, much like Shakespeare, Dumas tended to draw his plots from history (to which he did not adhere very carefully) and from the writings of others. The basic plot for *The Count of Monte Cristo* was taken from a narrative of famous police cases written by Jacques

Peuchet. In Peuchet's book he tells the story of François Picaud, a young man engaged to a wealthy girl. His friends envied him and denounced him as an English spy, and he was imprisoned for seven years. In prison, he met a wealthy Italian clergyman, who left him his fortune when he died. Picaud used his new fortune, along with many disguises, to avenge himself on his enemies. Building on this brief police narrative, Dumas produced one of the greatest adventure stories in all of literature.

PLOT SUMMARY

The story begins in Marseilles, where a young first mate, Edmond Dantes, has just brought his ship safely home after the death of its captain. The owner of the ship Monsieur Morrel, is so impressed that he names the nineteen-year-old Dantes the new captain of the vessel, the *Pharaon*. The ship's purser, Danglars, is jealous of Dantes' success. He and a malcontent named Caderousse nurse their anger, and draw into their conspiracy Fernand Mondego, who is hopelessly in love with Dantes' fiancée, Mercedes. They plot to frame Dantes for an act of treason (he had stopped by Elba on the way home, at the request of his dying captain, to deliver a package to Napoleon and take a letter from him to Paris). The next day, in the middle of Dantes' and Mercedes' wedding, guards burst in and arrest Dantes. He is taken before the deputy public prosecutor, Villefort, who recognizes that he has been framed, but when he looks at the offending letter, he sees that it is addressed to his father, the head of the Bonapartist faction in Paris. Villefort realizes that this could ruin his career, so he destroys the letter and sends Dantes away to the Chateau d'If, whence he expects him never to return. While Dantes is in prison, his father dies of starvation and neglect, and his funeral expenses are paid by Morrel.

At the Chateau d'If, Dantes spends six years in solitary confinement, first seeking and then blaming God for his suffering. On the verge of suicide, he hears a scratching at the wall of his cell. He begins digging, and soon encounters another prisoner, the Abbe Faria. The old man, hearing Dantes' tale, figures out who betrayed him and why they did it, and Dantes sets his mind on revenge. Faria then spends eight years educating young Dantes while they plot their escape, also telling him of an enormous fortune to which he is heir hidden on the uninhabited island of Monte Cristo. Before they can put their plan into action, however, Faria has a seizure and dies. Dantes takes to corpse to his cell and sews himself into the priest's shroud, thinking to dig his way out with his knife after the burial. He is cast into the sea, however, with a cannonball tied to his feet. Dantes, now thirty-three years old, manages to escape and swims to freedom.

He is picked up by a Genoese smuggling vessel, where he serves on the crew during his recuperation. He convinces them to leave him at the island of Monte Cristo, where he discovers the treasure of which Faria had spoken. He puts a few gems in his pocket, then travels to Italy with the smugglers, who have returned for him. There he buys a yacht, returns to Monte Cristo and retrieves the remainder of the enormous treasure, and sends his friend from the smuggler, Jacopo, to Marseilles to find out what has happened to his father and fiancée. He finds that his father is dead and that Mercedes is nowhere to be found.

Dantes returns to Marseilles disguised as the Abbe Busoni, where he goes to an inn now owned by Caderousse. There he receives confirmation of the plot against him by Fernand and Danglars, finds that Danglars and Fernand are now wealthy and living in Paris and that Mercedes has married Fernand because she thought that Dantes was dead, and gives Caderousse a large diamond as a reward. He then disguises himself as Lord Wilmore, an English investment banker,

and visits the Inspector of Prisons, where he sees his own prison records and those of Abbe Faria and obtains the letter written by Fernand and Danglars against him, as well as confirming that Villefort had been the one who had condemned him to prison. He then visits Monsieur Morrel and finds him in despair because his shipping business is failing. Having bought up almost all of Morrel's debt, "Lord Wilmore" gives him a reprieve of five months despite the news that the *Pharaon*, his last remaining ship, had gone down. Five months later, nothing has changed, and, after consultation with his son Maximilien, Morrel prepares to commit suicide out of shame at being unable to pay his creditors. Right before he pulls the trigger, however, his daughter Julie is instructed to go to a certain place, where she finds a red purse that Morrel had used to send money to Dantes' father in his extremity. The purse contains all of Morrel's notes of indebtedness marked "paid," along with a large diamond for Julie's dowry, enabling her to marry her fiancée Emmanuel Herbaut. Shortly thereafter, a ship designed and painted to look exactly like the *Pharaon* sails into port laden with cargo, and Morrel's business and life are saved.

Ten years later, Baron Franz d'Epinay and his young friend Albert de Morcerf (Fernand and Mercedes' son) arrive in Rome on holiday. There they meet the fabulously wealthy Count of Monte Cristo, who is accompanied by an exotic, lovely Greek woman named Haydee. He offers to let them use his coach during the festival, and invites them to his window to watch a public execution. Two men are to be executed, but one, Peppino, is reprieved at the last minute. He is associated with the bandit chieftain Luigi Vampa, and Monte Cristo has purchased his freedom, for which Vampa is thankful. Later, Albert is kidnaped by Vampa, and Monte Cristo liberates him. Albert is grateful, of course, and agrees to introduce Monte Cristo to Paris society when he comes to the city in three months' time.

Monte Cristo arrives in Paris and is introduced to Albert's friends and family. Among them are Maximilien Morrel, now a captain in the guards, and Lucien Debray, Secretary to the Minister of the Interior. Albert's father, the Count de Morcerf (Fernand Mondego), does not recognize Monte Cristo as Edmond Dantes, but his wife Mercedes recognizes him immediately, though she keeps her knowledge to herself. Dantes then buys a summer house in Auteuil, formerly owned by the parents of Madame de Villefort. He learns from his steward, Bertuccio, that the house had been the site of bizarre events. Bertuccio himself had attempted to kill Villefort, who had served his brother unjustly, and in the process had discovered a box containing a baby, nearly dead but still breathing. The baby was the illegitimate child of Villefort and Madame Danglars, his mistress. Bertuccio raised the child, Benedetto, as his own, though he at a young age turned to a life of crime, killed Bertuccio's sister-in-law and fled. Bertuccio also informs Monte Cristo that Caderousse, after receiving the diamond from Abbe Busoni, had sold it to a jeweler, then murdered the jeweler and kept both jewel and money; as a result, he had been imprisoned under a life sentence.

Monte Cristo now begins to ingratiate himself with the Villefort and Danglars families. He opens an unlimited line of credit with Danglars' bank, buys two horses from Danglars at twice their value, then returns them as a gift when Madame Danglars is upset at her husband for selling them. He then arranges to have the carriage, which is carrying Madame de Villefort and her son Edouard, run wild, only to be rescued by Monte Cristo's mute Nubian servant Ali. In the days that follow, Monte Cristo visits Maximilien Morrel at the home of Emmanuel and Julie Herbaut and is touched by their fond memories of their father's unknown benefactor - they have even preserved the red purse in which his deliverance arrived. Meanwhile, we learn that Maximilien is in love with Valentine de Villefort. She is engaged to Franz d'Epinay, whom she does not love,

and Maximilien is too poor to be a suitable match. Later, Monte Cristo has a conversation with Madame de Villefort about healing and poisons, and offers to give her a vial of the potion he used to save Edouard after the carriage accident, warning her that, in large doses, it is fatal without leaving a trace.

When Monte Cristo takes Haydee to the opera, she nearly faints when she sees the Count de Morcerf, and tells Monte Cristo that he is the man who betrayed her father and sold her into slavery. Apparently, this is how Fernand made his mysterious fortune. Meanwhile, Albert de Morcerf is engaged to Eugenie Danglars, and both of them would like nothing better than to avoid the marriage, and Valentine de Villefort, who is engaged to marry Franz d'Epinau, doesn't love him either; the match is purely a financial one. Lucien Debray has been having an affair with Madame Danglars and passing her inside information, which she is using to increase her husband's fortune in the stock market. Monte Cristo continues to weave his plans, hiring an old man to impersonate Marquis Bartolomeo Cavalcanti and the young scoundrel Benedetto to pretend to be his long-lost son, Andrea Cavalcanti. They are to be introduced to society at a dinner party thrown by Monte Cristo. At the same time, Valentine and Maximilien meet, trying to avoid the inevitable. It turns out that Madame Villefort doesn't want Valentine to marry at all, but to enter a convent so her son Edouard can get Monsieur Villefort's entire inheritance. Noirtier, who as the result of a stroke can neither move nor speak, loves his granddaughter dearly and wants to do something to help her. He changes his will so that his entire fortune will go to charity if Valentine marries Franz, thus hoping to discourage him from going through with the match. Monte Cristo, meanwhile, plants a false report of a revolution in Spain, which Debray passes on to Madame Danglars; she gets her husband to sell all his Spanish bonds, the report turns out to be false, and he loses a million francs.

For the Count's dinner party, he has the entire house redecorated except for one small bedroom in the rear. While giving his guests, who include the Danglars and Villefort families, a guided tour, he tells a story about the back bedroom, supposedly drawn from his imagination, but in reality the actual account of the birth and attempted murder of the baby born to Villefort and Madame Danglars. He then announces that, while digging in the garden, he had come upon the skeleton of an infant in the ground. Bertuccio recognizes Villefort and Madame Danglars as the principals in the incident he had witnessed many years before, and is startled to see that the young man introduced as Andrea Cavalcanti is really his no-good adopted son Benedetto. As Benedetto leaves the party, he is stopped by Caderousse, who has escaped from prison and demands money for his silence about Benedetto's true identity. Meanwhile, Madame Danglars goes home and retires to her room with Debray, but Danglars bursts in, throws Debray out, and tells his wife that he can tolerate her little affairs as long as they make money out of the deal, but that he will not tolerate financial reverses; in fact, he argues that Debray should bear the cost of half the money lost in the Spanish bonds debacle. Danglars is also intrigued by the obvious wealth of the Cavalcantis, and visits Monte Cristo to seek more information, hinting that he might be willing to break his daughter's engagement to Albert de Morcerf if she could be more advantageously linked to a wealthy Italian prince. In the process, he drops hints about the Count de Morcerf's shady past, and Monte Cristo encourages him to investigate his lead further by initiating inquiries in Yanina, the site of the Ali Pasha affair.

The next day, Madame Danglars rushes to Villefort's office in a panic. He tells her that Monte Cristo could not have found a skeleton in the garden, since the child had been stolen by whoever stabbed him, and if the child had died, the attempted murderer surely would have exposed Villefort. They are worried about how much Monte Cristo knows, and Villefort is

determined to find out who the man really is. He discovers that his only two real friends in Paris are the Abbe Busoni and Lord Wilmore. He has a friend from the police visit one while he visits the other, and they tell conflicting stories about the Count's true identity. Thus Villefort knows no more than he did at the beginning. At a ball thrown by the Morcerfs, Monte Cristo refuses to eat or drink anything, and Mercedes notices. They have a conversation in which neither admits knowing who the other is, but the Count tells Mercedes that she can trust him. Villefort then appears announcing that Valentine's grandfather (his former father-in-law) has died; shortly thereafter, her grandmother dies as well, and the doctor announces that both have been poisoned using brucine. Before her death, Valentine's grandmother had tried to force her to marry d'Epinay, but she and Maximilien had agreed to run away rather than have her go through with the marriage. Valentine introduces Maximilien to Noirtier, who agrees to help them get together. When Franz arrives to sign the marriage contract, Noirtier asks to see him. He then orders his servant Barrois to show Franz evidence that Noirtier had killed Franz's father in a duel. Franz rushes from the house, all thoughts of marriage forgotten.

Andrea Cavalcanti (Benedetto) visits the Danglars home, and the Baron tries to get Eugenie to spend time with him - a fate she tries desperately to avoid. Albert, meanwhile, visits Monte Cristo and is introduced to Haydee, who tells her story without naming the man who betrayed her father to death and sold her into slavery (who was, of course, Albert's father). Franz d'Epinay calls off his engagement to Valentine de Villefort, and Noirtier changes his will again, leaving everything to her with the provision that he live with her for the remainder of his days. When the Count de Morcerf visits Danglars to try to confirm the engagement of Albert and Eugenie, Danglars tells him that he has changed his mind, but refuses to say why. At the same time, a newspaper editor named Beauchamp publishes an article linking Fernand Mondego to the betrayal of Ali Pasha at Yanina. Albert, thinking his father has been slandered, challenges Beauchamp to a duel. Maximilien visits Noirtier with Valentine, and the three discuss their plans. During the visit, Barrois, who is thirsty, takes a drink from Noirtier's glass and immediately falls down and dies. The cup was laced with brucine, the same poison that had killed Villefort's former in-laws; the only reason Noirtier had not died is because he had been taking small doses of the poison for years as a treatment for his paralysis. The doctor is convinced that Valentine is the murderer because she was the primary heir of all three real or intended victims. Meanwhile, Caderousse demands more money from Benedetto. In the course of their discussion, they decide to rob Monte Cristo's house while the inhabitants are away. When they arrive at night, Abbe Busoni confronts Caderousse, who tells the story of his escape from prison; it turns out that Lord Wilmore had smuggled in a file that he and Benedetto had used to escape. Busoni threatens to reveal Andrea Cavalcanti's true identity, and Caderousse attacks him with a knife. Busoni wards off the threat and forces Caderousse to write a letter to Danglars revealing that Cavalcanti is a convict. When Caderousse leaves the house, Benedetto stabs him, putting an end to his blackmail. Before he dies, Caderousse writes a letter identifying Benedetto as his murderer, and Busoni reveals his true identity as Edmond Dantes.

Meanwhile, Beauchamp has been to Yanina and has uncovered proof that the Count de Morcerf was the betrayer of Ali Pasha. He brings the evidence to Albert, who sadly thanks him and calls off the duel. When the Chamber of Deputies investigates the matter, Haydee testifies against Morcerf, and Albert comes to realize that Monte Cristo must have been the one who was responsible for exposing his father. He then determines to challenge the Count to a duel. Monte Cristo, who had initially had an aversion to Albert for his father's sake, has come to respect the

young man, and has no desire to fight a duel with him. Albert insists, and Mercedes draws Monte Cristo aside and begs him not to kill her son, and in the process swears her undying love for Edmond Dantes. He agrees to spare Albert, even at the cost of his own life. When he arrives for the duel the next morning, Albert refuses to fight, instead apologizing for the way his father betrayed Edmond Dantes; obviously, Mercedes had told him everything. Mercedes and Albert decided to leave the Count of Morcerf, and Monte Cristo tells them about some money buried under a tree in the yard of the house in Marseilles in which he used to live. He tells them that the money belongs to Mercedes, and should be enough to sustain her for the rest of her life. She uses it to enter a convent. Morcerf angrily visits the Count of Monte Cristo, furious that Albert had called off the duel. He demands to know who Monte Cristo is. When the Count reveals himself as Edmond Dantes, Morcerf rushes home, finds that his family has left him, and puts a bullet in his brain.

Baron Danglars announces the engagement of Eugenie to Andrea Cavalcanti; when Eugenie objects, he tells her that he is on the brink of financial ruin, and that he needs to engagement contract to restore public confidence in his bank. She agrees to sign the contract, but shortly thereafter runs off to Italy disguised as a man with her friend Louise d'Armilly. When Monte Cristo reveals the existence of a letter from Caderousse to Danglars, Benedetto panics and flees. He is soon caught and arrested at a nearby inn when he descends the chimney of the room occupied by Eugenie and Louise. Meanwhile, Valentine has been getting progressively sicker. She, too, is being poisoned, but Noirtier has been protecting her by gradually getting her system accustomed to brucine. Abbe Busoni rents the house next door to the Villefort home and keeps watch over Valentine by night. Every time poison is placed in her glass, he replaces it with medicine; when she sees him do it, he explains what is happening and tells her to watch who puts something in her glass the next time. The culprit, of course, is Madame de Villefort, who wants her son Edouard to inherit his father's wealth. Valentine is horrified, but refuses to expose her stepmother. Monte Cristo convinces her that there is a solution, and gives her a tiny pill to swallow.

The pill puts her into a deathlike trance, so that even the doctor believes her to be dead. Maximilien is overwhelmed with grief, and when he reveals his love for Valentine to Villefort, the prosecutor commiserates with him. Noirtier summons his son and reveals the identity of the murderer, while Monte Cristo tells Noirtier what is really going on with Valentine. Danglars, meanwhile has fallen ruinously into debt and plans to run away from his creditors. After Valentine's funeral, Monte Cristo spirits her away to the island from which he took his name. Maximilien determines to kill himself, but Monte Cristo stops him by revealing his true identity and exacting a promise to wait one month before committing suicide. After Danglars flees, Madame Danglars looks to Debray for comfort, but he coldly treats her as nothing more than a business partner. At the same time, Albert de Morcerf makes plans to enter the army.

Villefort, while building a case upon which to prosecute Benedetto, privately tells his wife that he knows of her murders, but will not expose her because of the shame it would bring to him. He orders her to kill herself with the same poison she used on the others, and tells her that if she refuses, he will denounce her publicly and see her hang. Bertuccio, meanwhile, has told Benedetto the true story of his origins, and the young man tells all at his trial. Villefort confesses his guilt and rushes home to save his wife, realizing that he is as guilty as she. He is too late, however, and finds both Madame de Villefort and Edouard dead from the fatal poison. Villefort runs to see his father and finds the Abbe Busoni there as well. Busoni reveals his true identity, and Villefort tells them what has happened. Monte Cristo, shocked at the death of the innocent

Edouard and doubting for the first time the justice of his actions, rushes to try to save him with his magic elixir, but he is too late. Villefort, overwhelmed by grief, loses his sanity. Monte Cristo, his vengeance now complete, leaves Paris with Maximilien. He visits Mercedes for the last time, and then travels to the Chateau d'If to revisit the site of his imprisonment. There he finds Abbe Faria's manuscript, which confirms in his mind the essential rightness of his actions.

Danglars, fleeing to Italy with his creditors' money, is kidnaped by the bandit chieftain Luigi Vampa. Vampa makes him comfortable, but charges outrageous prices for food and drink. Soon, most of the five million francs Danglars has stolen has run out, and he tries starving himself to conserve the last of his money. Finally, Monte Cristo appears, reveals his identity, and lets Danglars go - penniless, his hair turned white with terror, dumped on the side of an Italian roadway. The Count then fulfills his promise to take Maximilien to Monte Cristo and allow him to commit suicide if he so desires. There, he offers him what he thinks is poison, which Maximilien drinks. Valentine, still alive, then appears, Maximilien wakes from a deep sleep, and the two lovers are reunited. Monte Cristo asks Valentine to care for Haydee, since he intends to retreat into permanent isolation from humanity, but Haydee cries out that she cannot live without him, and the two embrace, Monte Cristo seeing Haydee's love as a sign of God's forgiveness. Monte Cristo and Haydee depart, and the Count leaves a letter in which he gives all his possessions in France and on the island to the couple as a wedding present. They sail to Italy, where Noirtier waits to give his granddaughter away in marriage.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Edmond Dantes - The protagonist of the novel, Dantes is an idealistic and upright young man who appears to have a bright future ahead of him. At the age of nineteen, he is engaged to a beautiful girl who adores him and has just been named captain of a ship. Those who are jealous of him betray him, however, and he is cast into prison in the Chateau d'If. There the Abbe Faria tutors him and tells him where to find a fabulous fortune. After his escape, he uses the fortune to wreak vengeance on his enemies. At various times, he disguises himself as English nobleman Lord Wilmore, Italian priest Abbe Busoni, Sinbad the Sailor (used for anonymous communications), and, of course, the Count of Monte Cristo.
- Louis Dantes - Edmond's father, he dies of grief while Edmond is in prison. His death is the main reason for Edmond's elaborate schemes of revenge.
- Mercedes - Edmond Dantes' fiancée, she marries his friend Fernand Mondego when she is told he has died in prison. When he returns to get his revenge, she recognizes him, but keeps silent about his true identity.
- Abbe Faria - An Italian cleric imprisoned in the Chateau d'If for his political opinions, he tutors Dantes and tells him of an enormous fortune hidden on the island of Monte Cristo. Dantes escapes from the Chateau d'If by hiding himself in the old priest's shroud after Faria dies.

- Fernand Mondego - A simple laborer in Marseilles who is in love with Dantes' fiancée Mercedes, and for that reason helps to betray him. He marries Mercedes and they have a son, Albert. He accumulates a fortune through treachery. After Monte Cristo reveals his double-dealing against Ali Pasha and his family, he commits suicide.
- Albert de Morcerf - Fernand and Mercedes' son, he is a noble and generous young man; when his father commits suicide, he blames Monte Cristo and challenges him to a duel. The Count refuses to harm him for Mercedes' sake, and Albert refuses to harm the Count when his mother tells him the truth about Mondego.
- Franz d'Epinau - Albert's friend who is engaged to be married to Valentine de Villefort, though they do not love one another.
- Baron Danglars - A ship's purser who is jealous of Dantes' success, he enters the plot to betray the young captain. He later becomes wealthy, though his greed makes him an easy target for the Count's revenge; Monte Cristo convinces him to lend huge amounts of money for enterprises that fail, leaving him penniless. His family deserts him and he is left with nothing.
- Madame Danglars - Greedy, selfish, and constantly engaging in affairs behind her husband's back, she receives government secrets from one of her lovers in order to expand her husband's fortune; when the information turns out to be faulty (courtesy of the Count, of course), they lose a fortune.
- Eugenie Danglars - The daughter of Baron Danglars, she is an independent girl who hates all men. After her father's financial ruin, she runs away to Italy with her friend, Louise d'Armilly.
- Lucien Debray - Secretary to the Minister of the Interior and Madame Danglars' lover, he feeds her inside information which she uses to pad both their fortunes.
- Gaspard Caderousse - A tailor who knows about, but does not participate in, the plot to frame Dantes. The Count learns of the plot from him, and on a number of occasions gives him money or otherwise helps him to advance himself, but Caderousse is so lazy and greedy that he always turns to crime and violence. He is killed trying to rob Monte Cristo.
- Gerard de Villefort - The public prosecutor who recognizes that Dantes has been framed, but then realizes that the letter he carries implicates his own father, and thus threatens to ruin his reputation, Villefort sends Dantes to the Chateau d'If. He eventually becomes a government prosecutor in Paris. He goes mad when Dantes reveals that he tried to kill his own illegitimate child, borne by Madame Danglars, shortly after its birth.
- Madame de Villefort - She is willing to murder to ensure her son's fortune, and poisons several members of her household in order to accomplish her goal.

- Monsieur Noirtier - Villefort's father, a former French Revolutionary now paralyzed by a stroke. He retains his wits, however, and does all he can to foil the plots of his son and daughter-in-law and help his beloved granddaughter Valentine.
- Barrois - Noirtier's faithful servant, the only one who can communicate with the stricken old man besides Villefort and Valentine.
- Valentine de Villefort - Villefort's daughter by his first wife, she is kind and generous. In love with Maximilien Morrel, she is protected by her grandfather and the Count.
- Edouard de Villefort - The half-brother of Valentine, this spoiled brat is the apple of his mother's eye and the object of all her schemes.
- Benedetto - The illegitimate son of Villefort and Madame Danglars, he did not die when his father exposed him to the elements that night, but was raised Bertuccio. He grows up to be a charming criminal, and, in the guise of Count Andrea Cavalcanti, is used as a pawn by Monte Cristo in his plot to ruin Villefort and Danglars.
- Monsieur Morrel - The ship owner who makes Edmond the captain of one of his vessels, he tries to get Edmond out of prison and provide relief to his dying father, but fails. When Dantes escapes, he finds Morrel on the brink of financial ruin, but manipulates events to restore his friend's prosperity.
- Maximilien Morrel - Morrel's son, a brave and noble young man who shares his father's character. He is in love with Valentine de Villefort, and the Count protects them and ensures that they successfully get together by the end of the story.
- Emmanuel and Julie Herbaut - Maximilien's sister and brother-in-law, they are a happy and loving couple who do good as they are able.
- Ali Pasha - A Greek nationalist betrayed by Fernand Mondego, he is killed by the Turks and his wife and daughter are sold into slavery.
- Haydee - Ali Pasha's daughter who is bought in the slave market by Monte Cristo. She becomes his companion, reveals the treachery of Mondego in court, and at the end of the book, appears poised to marry the Count.
- Bertuccio - A petty criminal who becomes the Count's loyal steward. He also knows Villefort's secret, having raised the abandoned child, and is eager for revenge against the public prosecutor.
- Luigi Vampa - An Italian bandit who helps Monte Cristo obtain his revenge in return for having been freed by the Count years before.
- Jacopo - A smuggler who helps Dantes make good his escape, the Count makes him the captain of his private yacht.

- Peppino - An Italian shepherd who is saved from execution by the Count's intercession.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“The two lovers went on their way, as blissful as two souls rising up to heaven.” (p.14)

“Finally, having exhausted all human resources, Dantes turned to God. He remembered the prayers his mother had taught him and found meanings in them of which he had formerly been unaware. For the happy man prayer is only a jumble of words, until the day when sorrow comes to explain to him the sublime language by means of which he speaks to God.” (p.34)

“The sea is the cemetery of the Chateau d’If.” (p.66)

“Then he returned, still doubting his senses, rushed into the cave and found himself once again in the presence of his mine of gold and jewels. This time he fell to his knees, convulsively pressed his hands over his pounding heart and uttered a prayer that was intelligible to God alone.” (p.77-78)

“And now, ... farewell to kindness, humanity and gratitude. Farewell to all sentiments that gladden the heart. I have substituted myself for Providence in rewarding the good; may the God of vengeance now yield me His place to punish the wicked!” (Edmond Dantes, p.109)

“But for slow, profound, infinite and eternal suffering I’d try to avenge myself by inflicting similar suffering. ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’” (Monte Cristo, p.116)

“Therefore, since I am from no country, since I ask no government for protection, and since I regard no man as my brother, I am not deterred by any of the scruples or obstacles that paralyze the efforts of the weak.” (Monte Cristo, p.177)

“No, not perfect, ... only impenetrable. I maintain my pride in the face of men, but I abandon it before God, who drew me out of nothingness to make me what I am.” (Monte Cristo, p.177)

“I want to be Providence, for the greatest, the most beautiful and the most sublime thing I know of in this world is to reward and punish I made the bargain with [Satan]; I may lose my soul because of it, but if I had it to do over again I would do the same thing.” (Monte Cristo, p.178)

“Monte Cristo paled at the horrible sight. He realized that he had gone beyond the limits of rightful vengeance and that he could no longer say, ‘God is for me and with me.’” (p.403)

“I’m no longer a thinking creature, Edmond. God has so shaken me with His storms that I’ve lost my will. Since I’m alive, He doesn’t want me to die; if He sends me help, it will be because He wants me to accept it.”

“That’s not how we ought to worship God,” said Monte Cristo. “God wants us to understand Him and discuss His purposes: that’s why He gave us free will.”

“Don’t say that!” cried Mercedes. “If I believed God had given me free will, what would remain to save me from utter despair?” (Mercedes and Monte Cristo, p.412)

“God, who raised me up against my enemies and made me victorious, didn’t want me to have this penance at the end of my victory. I wanted to punish myself, but God wishes to forgive me. Perhaps your love will make me forget what I must forget. One word from you, Haydee, has enlightened me more than twenty years of my slow wisdom. You’re all I have left in the world; through you I attach myself to life again; through you I can suffer; through you I can be happy.” (Monte Cristo, p.440)

Live, then, and be happy, beloved children of my heart, and never forget that, until the day God deigns to reveal the future to man, the sum of all human wisdom will be contained in these two words: Wait and hope.” (Monte Cristo, p.441)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*, is the protagonist an admirable character? Why or why not? Do the changes he experiences over the course of the novel make him more or less admirable? Be sure to cite specifics from the story as you answer the question.
2. Discuss the political viewpoint expressed in Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*. From your knowledge of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era, how would you assess the politics of the author? Is he a Bonapartist or a royalist? Support your arguments with details from the novel.
3. What are the consequences of greed as revealed in Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*? Is there ever such thing as having enough? Choose three characters from the story and discuss how their experiences illuminate the consequences of lusting for material possessions.
4. Which character in Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* experiences the greatest suffering? Why do you think so? How is this character affected by the suffering he or she experiences? Be sure to use specifics from the novel to support your arguments.
5. Is Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* a moral story? Why or why not? Discuss the moral themes of the novel and evaluate them in the light of Scripture.
6. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” With these words, Scripture tells us to love our enemies rather than seeking their harm. Discuss the extent to which Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* demonstrates or ignores the truth of this biblical principle.

7. In Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmond Dantes considers himself to be the arm of Providence in wreaking vengeance on his enemies. Does anyone ever have the right to view himself as the Hand of God to bring justice in the world? Why or why not? What happens when one wrongly arrogates to himself such a task? Support your arguments with specifics from the novel and from the Bible.
8. In Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the protagonist views himself as being on a divine mission of retribution. The very name of the island where he finds his treasure - "The Mountain of Christ" - makes this connection. Is he justified in drawing this conclusion about the purpose of his escape from the Chateau d'If and his discovery of the treasure? Why or why not? Support your conclusions with specifics from both the book and the Bible.
9. What does Edmond Dantes learn from his complex efforts to revenge himself upon his enemies in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*? Is the lesson he learns a biblical one? Support your conclusion from the novel and from Scripture.
10. According to Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, what is the ultimate source of human happiness? What differentiates the happy and unhappy characters in the story? Compare and contrast the author's view of happiness to that found in the Bible. Be sure to use specifics in your essay.
11. Discuss the extent to which Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* pictures love as essential to true humanity. According to the author, is it more important to love or to be loved? Why? Support your arguments with details from the story.
12. Throughout the course of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the protagonist assumes many different names and identities. Are these simply ways of keeping his true identity unknown, or is there a sense in which each persona brings out and emphasizes different character traits of Edmond Dantes? What traits are associated with each disguise? How do these different personas contribute to the development of the themes of the novel?
13. During the Romantic era, writers often portrayed suicide as a noble response to the discouragements of life, whether in matters of love or honor. To what extent is this the case in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*? Choose three characters who contemplate or actually commit suicide in the story and discuss the role of suicide in the moral universe of the author.
14. The Romantic era was one that valued emotion over intellect. Using this criterion, assess the extent to which Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* is a Romantic novel. Support your conclusions with details from the story.

15. In Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, what does the protagonist learn about the dangers of playing God? How does this lesson change him as a person? What role does it play in the plot, especially with regard to the development of its major themes? Use specifics to support your arguments.
16. Discuss the image of death and resurrection as it appears in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. In your essay, focus on three aspects of a single character or on three different characters for whom the image is relevant. How does the image help to convey the major themes of the novel?
17. Discuss the discontinuity between society's standards of justice and God's standards in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. In what ways are those people viewed by society as evil pictured as good, and vice versa? What aspects of French society is the author criticizing? Do you agree with his assessments? Why or why not?
18. In chapter 20 of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the Count argues that one who imposes prolonged and profound suffering on another deserves worse than an instantaneous death, but instead deserves similar mental and emotional tortures. He justified this by quoting the biblical precept, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Does he use this Scripture passage rightly? Assess his justification for his program of revenge on his enemies in the light of biblical teaching. Be sure to support your argument with specifics from the novel.
19. "Be sure your sin will find you out." Discuss the self-disclosing nature of sin as revealed in the plot and action of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. In what sense are the villains in the story the victims of their own actions rather than of Monte Cristo's revenge? Is it then really Providence that brings them down in the end? Support your arguments with details from the story.
20. Discuss the role of forgiveness in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Is there any evidence in the story that any character ever learns the importance of this Christian virtue? Support your argument with details from the novel.
21. Compare and contrast the characters of Valentine de Villefort and Eugenie Danglars in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*. How do their differences help to bring out the qualities of each woman? Which do you consider the more admirable, and why?
22. When Dantes visits Mercedes for the last time in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, he encourages her to take charge of her own life by asserting the reality of free will. She responds by saying, "If I believed God had given me free will, what would remain to save me from utter despair?" What does she mean? Is she right? Support your arguments with specifics from the story and from Scripture.

23. At the end of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the Count tells Maximilien and Valentine that all human wisdom is contained in two words - "wait and hope." Is he right? To what extent does this conclusion reflect biblical truth about life? To what extent is it an appropriate conclusion to the novel? Support your arguments with specifics from both sources.
24. To what extent are the punishments suffered by Mondego, Danglars, and Villefort in Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* examples of poetic justice? Does the punishment fit the crime in each case? Why or why not? Support your conclusions with specifics from the book.
25. In Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Edmond Dantes often compares his experience in the chateau d'If to death. To what extent is the comparison appropriate? What changes does he undergo in prison that could legitimately be compared to death? Be specific.
26. In Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, is there any character besides Monte Cristo himself who undergoes significant transformation in the course of the story? Detail that transformation and discuss its significance to the themes of the novel.
27. Does Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* portray a moral universe? For the author, is there a justice that exists beyond the realm of man and society? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
28. At the end of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo*, the Count implies that true joy can only be appreciated by those who have first suffered. Do you agree? Discuss this concept in the light of the details of the story and the teachings of Scripture.
29. Most movie versions of Alexandre Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* end with Monte Cristo reunited with Mercedes. The book, however, does not end that way. Why did the author choose not to reunite the lovers of the book's opening pages? Do you think that this was the right decision, or did you want to see them get back together? Support your arguments with details from the story.