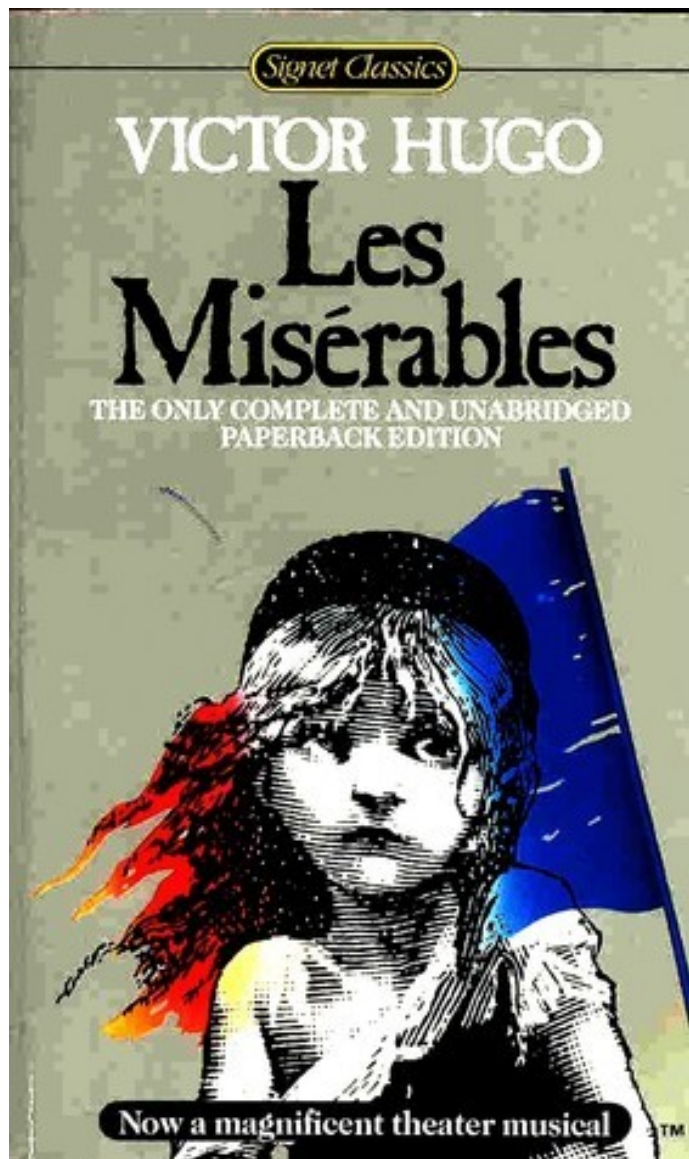

Victor Hugo

Les Misérables (Les Misérables)



Title: Les Misérables (Les Misérables)

Author: Victor Hugo

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Description

Introducing one of the most famous characters in literature, Jean Valjean-the noble peasant imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread-*Les Misérables* (1862) ranks among the greatest novels of all time. In it Victor Hugo takes readers deep into the Parisian underworld, immerses them in a battle between good & evil, & carries them onto the barricades during the uprising of 1832 with a breathtaking realism unsurpassed in modern prose.

Within his dramatic story are themes that capture the intellect & the emotions: crime & punishment, the relentless persecution of Valjean by Inspector Javert, the desperation of the prostitute Fantine, the amorality of the rogue Thénardier & the universal desire to escape the prisons of our own minds. *Les Misérables* gave Hugo a canvas upon which he portrayed his criticism of the French political & judicial systems, but the portrait which resulted is larger than life, epic in scope-an extravagant spectacle that dazzles the senses as it touches the heart.

Insightful reviews

David: What fascinating stories! Poor Fantine suffered greatly because of the poor choices she had made in life. She brought misery upon herself, but she has our pity. Jean Valjean was not an innocent man in the wrong place at the wrong time, like I assumed before reading the book. On the contrary, he was a depraved imbecile. He was the scum of the Earth, yet he found redemption. Fantine is the warning, Valjean is the hope. In giving all that he had and everything that he was for the benefit of someone even less fortunate than himself, he attained greatness.

Victor Hugo infuses the stories with politics, religion, and ethics. Marius is furious when his father suggests that he should make Cosette his lover instead of his wife. Regarding the sanctity of marriage, on their wedding night, Hugo simply remarks that the house became a temple.

I have been to Victor Hugo's house many times. I am always impressed with his desk. It is simple and tall, at an angle. It was an ideal height for him to use standing, as some problem with his hip made it uncomfortable for him to sit. I find it remarkable that he wrote all of his very long books standing up.

I have also been to Les égoux (the sewers) of Paris. Victor Hugo happened to be friends with the only man in the world at the time who had charted the intricate sewer systems of Paris. They really are amazing. In my opinion, stone buildings did not make Paris great, waste-management did.

John: My favorite book.

I came to this book through a fairly twisted path. My brother was a huge fan of the musical. I enjoyed it and wanted to read the book it was based on. I couldn't do it. The unabridged version took so long to get to the parts I knew. Hugo's long explanations and histories left me lost. I wussed out and read the abridged edition.

When I had finished the abridged edition, I immediately turned around and read the unabridged edition. What a difference! What I had previously spurned as tedious and long winded added an entirely new dimension to the book. The descriptions and histories did more than detail the locations of events. They gave them a weight of history and events that loom over the lives of the characters. It drove home that while the characters are compelling in their own right, they don't exist in a vacuum.

Everything had more meaning and emotion for being part of the larger world, rather than distanced from it.

Trish: Christine Donougher's new translation is brilliant. That the novel is a classic, we knew. What Donougher does is make the work seem fluent to our eye and ear and as thrilling to us now as it must have been when it was published in 1862. The relevance of this story to our world cries out to us, and the simplicity of the language makes it accessible even to a schoolchild. The time it must have taken both the translator and the publisher (Penguin Classics) to complete this gorgeously-produced novel is staggering but they have allowed us to marvel at Hugo's work once again.

What astonishes me is that by the time Hugo wrote *Les Miserables*, he was already a widely respected poet and author in France. Hugo began as a poet and was in his late thirties when he wrote *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Twenty years later, *Les Miserables* was published. Part I was published first, and sold so well that subscribers lined up for the rest of the work. How could Hugo create characters as heartbreakingly complete as the young Gavroche, as recognizable as the teenaged Cosette, or as good as the Bishop of Digne? Hugo created an entire world with this huge novel, and we believe him about the bleak penury and poverty. But how did he know it?

Hugo is so supremely sure of his audience that two hundred and fifty pages into the novel he takes fifty pages to lead us on a tour of the old battlefield of Waterloo, recounting for us every strategy of the generals and how their plans went awry. "Let us go back now--it is one of the narrator's privileges," he says, knowing we would follow him wherever by this time, we are so anxious to hear about the child Cosette who was left with exploitative foster parents Thénardier and is now being sought by the again-fugitive Valjean. It turns out that the Battle of Waterloo is not just discursive after all, but tells us of the first meeting of Pontmercy and Thénardier.

Valjean is recaptured and sentenced to a chain-gang. The ingenious method of his escape this time is both breathtaking and heart-warming--he saves a working sailor from the deep--and we find ourselves mad for love of him. As we progress further in this magnificent novel, we begin to mull over why it is so remarkable: what qualities make it a classic? The scope and relevance of the work which we find immediate even today ("the poor will ever be with us") and...Hugo plays us. By his characterizations he captures something in us which wants to believe in goodness, in heroism, in fairness and the right for something better. He involves our every sense, our every emotion. Even the wicked are making sense of their cruel world and therefore can be seen as

humorous, or forgivable. We are on the barricades, waving the red flag and singing. What a brave book.

In the Production Notes of the latest Oscar-nominated version of the film starring Jackman, Crowe, Hathaway, Redmayne, Carter, and Cohen, all the actors praise the set for making them feel like they were in 19th Century Paris. When the Set Designers were asked where they got their inspiration, they said they had done a little bit of research, but most of what they constructed gave from the descriptions in the novel itself. The book is a self-contained world. We have everything we need to draw each character and know them intimately. Every bow is tied, every thread followed.

I have seen at least three different film versions of *Les Misérables* and I have to say that Tom Hooper's version stays with me the longest and best, while at the same time recognizing that I will always think of Gerard Depardieu as Jean Valjean. Tom Hooper's ability to make song the natural mode of communication was unlike anything I'd seen before. That skill, along with the actors' skills, paired with the Claude-Michel Schönberg score and the Herbert Kretzmer lyrics, together make such a brilliant work that one really is cheated unless one hears the score sung. Hugo would be proud.

The book is such a huge work that directors must choose what they will show, and Hooper changed his scenes from the stage presentations because he had more latitude. I so appreciate that he showed Éponine taking a bullet for Marius just as it is in the text. The story itself is an unwieldy thing and moving from the story of Jean Valjean to that portion that incorporates Marius is a big obstacle for directors *and* readers. Hooper manages it adroitly by choosing the telegenic and enormously compelling Eddie Redmayne to play Marius and Hugo manages it by making his work more interesting than anything else we could be reading. I can hardly imagine someone reading or listening to this story in the nineteenth century and what a miracle it would have seemed, with so many moments of riveting tension, chatty background, and characters real enough to paint.

Hooper, the director of the most recent film version, abridged the work so well and while I questioned the appearance of Marius' uncle hovering in some scenes, I can see why he wanted to include it. In the book the uncle is a creature of huge regrets and it must have seemed impossible to leave him out entirely, though I don't think it played well in the film.

By the same token, Hooper and Crowe made the death of Javert a much more emotional moment than it was for me when I read it. Crowe so *inhabited* the character of Javert we found ourselves actually caring for him at the same time we feared him. That is a complicated response. But I liked the way Hugo managed Javert's slipping away from the front door of Valjean's house with no words or sense of moment. That was Javert's moment of greatness, and it was so quiet and small, almost nonexistent. What a thing to write!

This translation by Christine Donougher is magnificent. She makes Hugo once again seem completely relevant and current through her use of language, accentuating Hugo's great gifts. I am so grateful I had the opportunity to see the differences between the work itself and any attempts at stage play. Hugo was a great storyteller and while I wish I could have heard the

clamor when the work was published that first time in 1862, I feel lucky to have experienced it in 2015.

[Here is a wonderful review and discussion](#) of Victor Hugo's life and writing that goes some distance to answering the questions that the novel raises.

Jason: 1466 pages!! and i have remoted the simplest unmarried sentence within the entire book. It describes the way you die in warfare: If whatever is horrible, if there's a truth that surpasses our worst dreams, it truly is this: to live, to determine the sun, to be in complete ownership of manly vigor, to have healthiness and joy, to snicker heartily, to hurry towards a glory that lures you on, to think lungs that breathe, a middle that beats, a brain that thinks, to speak, to hope, to love; to have mother, wife, children, to have sunlight, and suddenly, in much less time than it takes to cry out, to plunge into an abyss, to fall, to roll, to crush, to be crushed, to work out the heads of grain, the flowers, the leaves, the branches, not able to trap carry of anything, to suppose your sword useless, males below you, horses over you, to fight in vain, your bones damaged by means of a few kick within the darkness, to think a heel gouging your eye out in their sockets, raging on the horseshoe among your teeth, to stifle, to howl, to twist, to be lower than all this, and to say, "Just then i used to be a dwelling man!"(p. 355)Wow. How do you evaluation a 1466-paged entire and unabridged uber-classic? The booklet has the rectilinear dimensions of a fire-baked brick. it is a doorstep. Les Miserables is a successful, sweeping epic. It follows a number of interrelated characters all through their lives, and philosophizes on religion, language, warfare, science, etc. i am yes it truly is even more poignant, extra attractive in its unique language, yet this was once a passable translation. Nevertheless, i will not award greater than four stars, and here is why. The unabridged model is too a lot book; it is too slow-moving; it is too expansive; it is too overwrought; it truly is too circumlocutious. close to the tip of the publication (oh...say through web page 1150), I fast all started wasting the incentive to complete it, regardless of that i used to be nonetheless drawn to every one character. whilst i used to be finished, I felt the discharge of one month/40 hours of studying being lifted pleasantly off my shoulders, like elimination a fire-baked brick from my scapula and clavicles--definitely now not a 5-star characteristic. this isn't to claim it truly is poorly-written. at the contrary, i feel Hugo, greater than the other author in addition to Shakespeare, has the main memorable, proposal frightening one-liners. he will write a whole paragraph on a unmarried thought, then sum it up in a single profound, euphonic sentence.- not anything is so dismal because the brightness of abandoned streets.- a guy and not using a girl is a pistol and not using a hammer.- the floor in summer season is as speedy to dry as a kid's cheek.- not anything is so appealing as greenery washed via the rain and wiped by way of the sunbeam; it truly is hot freshness.- He who doesn't weep, doesn't see.- unsatisfied is he who surrenders himself to the altering middle of woman! Stop! i'll record a hundred of those aphorisms just by rifling in the course of the ebook and randomly pulling one from every one page. they're there, on each page, and they are all profound, take a look. Hugo additionally blithely diverges for 20-50 pages on war, language, religion, revolution, love, science, the Paris sewer system. during this unabridged version, Hugo's diversions act as an antecedent, basically constructing what initially appears like an pointless diatribe, yet really offers the historical past (or milieu) for a next storyline related to the most characters. For example, Hugo waxes for nearly 60 pages in regards to the conflict of Waterloo, with completely no connection with the

most story, other than on the end--the final paragraph of the diatribe--where he presents the severe hyperlink again to the story. i am not an editor, yet those diatribes, those philosophical meanderings, makes it absurdly effortless to edit Les Miserables right into a winning abridged work. lower out those diversions, and you have got fairly a riding tale of merely six hundred pages. The 'Complete and Unabridged' model has its place; it exposes the reader to the fantastic expanses of Victor Hugo's polymathic mind. However, as a last recommendation, i will in simple terms inform you to learn the abridged version!! i believe terrible announcing that, yet as Hugo could quip, anywhere you go, there you are. New words: euphony, antonomasia, sutler, chilblain, anchylosis, afflatus, demiurge, argot, ochlocracy

Jonathan: "We can merely think that its new existence as a musical - and what a suitable destiny for that the majority operatic novelist - may also help to convey Les Misérables to the eye of a brand new new release of readers, reminding them maybe that the abuses Hugo catalogues are nonetheless alive elsewhere, waiting for their very own chroniclers within the courageous new global of the 21st century." - Peter Washington, Introduction While i've got a private propensity in the direction of giving my love simply to many different novels, there are few novels which i'd ponder nice favourites. wherein I suggest that I either love and view them one of the maximum items of writing ever written. The Lord of the Rings, The Chronicles of Narnia, Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, the total Sherlock Holmes and entire tales and Poems quantity between these. Now this yr i will hopefully nation that i've got extra extra in Jonathan unusual & Mr Norrell and this nice work: Les Misérables. Les Misérables, as a novel, is much grander than its invaluable diversifications (of which i like to recommend the 1998 movie with Liam Neeson). it's not the easy story of Jean Valjean escaping from Inspector Javert. it's so a lot more. It is: a love story, the affection tale of France in addition to a romance; a tragedy, a listing of the depressing voters of old France; a historic chronicle, a mapping out of the cultural panorama of 1 snapshot of time; primarily it's a literary masterpiece. Victor Hugo could have his failings during this novel. from time to time he falls into pompous verbosity, rambling on approximately topics which seem to lack relevance to the story. However, what he has accomplished during this novel is little short of remarkable. this can be literature at its finest, a e-book recording the soreness and wonder of humanity and reflecting upon it in language that is either complicated and straightforward regardless of translation. talking of translation, this model via Charles E. Wilbour really first-class (if outdated fashioned), even if i ever re-read this I shall purchase a distinct translation with higher annotation. i beg somebody drawn to examining this e-book to get the unabridged version. analyzing the abridged types will in basic terms break the appeal of the tale and maybe your knowing of the tale itself. There are many subject matters all through Les Misérables. most folk who recognize something of the tale will understand that at its least difficult Les Misérables is a story in regards to the convict Jean Valjean, one of many nice characters of literature. a personality so fleshed out for the reader as to be nearly real. it's also the story approximately how Javert, inspector of police, hounds him throughout diverse instances and destinations to convey Valjean to felony justice. in lots of methods Les Misérables is a narrative as a result in regards to the cycle of heritage and the way the prior rises as much as chase the future. but it is, in my eyes, additionally one of many maximum tales of grace as opposed to the law. By grace as opposed to law, I suggest the belief of a guy being given a moment chance, contrasted with the legalistic view guy needs to pay for his crime despite his replaced ethical circumstance. Legalism in my eyes could have each reformed strong guy destroyed, and this can be what i believe Les Misérables portrays so very nicely.

Jean Valjean seizes the opportunity for redemption, even though Javert refuses to think that any guy sentenced as a convict might be able to develop into heroic. it truly is this refusal to think that drives the clash of Les Misérables and ends up in grace as opposed to legislations changing into one of many significant themes. First Update: I simply went and observed the hot movie - it was once powerfully moving. in terms of musicals I am inclined to like them. My favorite is definitely one of the Audrey Hepburn model of My reasonable Lady. My love of musicals having been generated via the publicity to the Muppets model of Treasure Island at a tender age. The Tom Hooper model of this book, or quite the musical model to the screen, is up there as a brand new favourite. Emotionally moving, incredible production, very good makeup, nice units and digital camera sequences. I additionally enjoyed the casting and imagine that criticisms of Russell Crow as Javert are a slightly unfair. i think these critics have been awaiting anything assorted to what he supplied while I continuously move in with as low expectancies of a movie as attainable (I say attainable simply because a few movies, like whilst I see The Hobbit half 1, could have excessive expectancies still). So yes, I totally suggest the motion picture model in the event you have not made time to work out it. and that i now are looking to get that soundtrack. in spite of the fact that i am not going to spend this simply reflecting on how solid the motion picture used to be but in addition approximately how the movie mentioned features of the publication to me in new ways. I felt the movie highlighted how the publication is ready the assumption of religion, legislations and charm nicely. I felt the movie additionally published extra intensity to how Hugo created a narrative all concerning the outcasts of society, all these members trodden upon via legislation and the higher echelons. The movie additionally pointed me to the truth that within the booklet and film the 'crimes' devoted through members comparable to Jean Valjean, Fantine and the revolutionaries are literally prompted through the tough stipulations of the state. The advice being that after somebody is able of strength or has the power to aid a much less advantaged individual they've got an ethical accountability to do so. Second Update: Last week I went and observed the Melbourne model of the musical which has simply published for the season. It used to be moving, visually astounding and higher than any convey i've got noticeable be performed in Melbourne before. it is a case of whatever - just like the novel itself - being so massive, bombastic and grand that it will probably in simple terms be defined as basically an impressive epic. back i used to be reminded of the truth that the great thing about the tale itself is how one occasion flows into another, resulting in the ultimate tragic conclusions - yet nonetheless with that feel of desire being renewed in vibrant younger love, freed from the harmful corruption of the 2 'parents" pasts. this can be mimicked for me in how one musical topic flows into another, getting used for one of many heroes creating a lament after which later for one of many villains or so on. I certainly suggest gazing a concert should you benefit from the tale of Les Miserables.

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