

Grade level: 10th-12th Grade

Subject: Language Arts

Rationale:

Students will examine the use of theme in the Manga Classics adaptation of Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Students will be asked to focus on specific illustrations in the novel and consider how the artist creates meaning with the visual medium of a graphic novel.

Instructional Duration: 3-4 hours

Objectives:

Students will:

- ✓ Read the graphic novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* and consider it as a visual adaptation of a classic piece of literature.
- ✓ Use images from the novel to answer specific essential questions.
- ✓ Understand the concept of theme as it pertains to a graphic novel adaptation of a classic text

Front-loaded information / understanding:

Theme - Students should be able to define and identify one or more themes from the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Imagery - Students should be able to define and identify imagery in the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Symbolism – Students should be able to define and identify one or more symbol from the original text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Foreshadowing – Students should be able to define the concept of foreshadowing and identify it when it appears within a text. This lesson will translate that concept for the graphic novel medium.

Manga – Many students have not been exposed to this type of reading. Prior to assigning any reading in the Manga Classic Text, instructors should cover the “How to read manga” section at the beginning of the book with their students to ensure understanding.

Instructional Strategies:

NOTE: The lessons contained below assume that students are reading the Manga Classic adaptation after having already been exposed to all or some part of the original text. If you are using the graphic novel adaptation as an alternative to reading the original novel, the lessons can still be utilized with modifications.

Students may have read the original novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas. Have them share with the class what they know about the text itself. Specific attention should be paid to how students visualize some of the more crucial moments of the text including, but not limited to, character appearance, conflict, thematic elements, foreshadowing, and symbolism.

Activity #1 – Answering Essential Questions (Pre-Reading)

Students should be asked to recall their experiences reading Dumas’s *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Instruct them to think about what parts of the novel stood out to them and why. Students should then be broken into groups of 3-4 and asked to consider how they themselves would adapt the text to a visual medium. In doing so, they will answer the following essential questions:

- ✓ *What is one major theme of the novel?*
- ✓ *Which 3 scenes from the novel serve to best illustrate one of these themes?*
- ✓ *Why did you choose each of these scenes?*
- ✓ *How would you utilize visual imagery to make these scenes come to life?*

Students will then be asked to provide three sketches (one for each scene selected). These sketches do not need to be elaborate but should stage the scene in some way (position of characters, background, and objects). Sketches should include a caption that contains specific guiding information that explains how the images shape understanding of the text (2-3 sentences).

Activity #2 – Author and Text Research

Have students research and report on the author, the time period, and the genre of this novel. Point them towards biographies of Alexandre Dumas, the French societal customs of the 19th Century, and the concept of the adventure/intrigue/revenge story style.

Some sample questions could include (but are not limited to):

1. Dumas also wrote *The Three Musketeers*. Research it and compare the plotline to this novel.
2. Why did Dumas choose to write a historic revenge tale? What do you think he was trying to accomplish?
3. What does the concept of “justice” mean in the novel? What does Edmond learn about himself during his pursuit of it?
4. How does the novel approach the politics of its time? What are some of the ways that the novel illustrates a person’s path to ascension and acceptance into high society?
5. How do you feel toward the Count as he enacts his vengeance on his enemies and their families?
6. How does romance play a part in this book?

Students can be assessed on the questions they are able/choose to answer and their results can spark initial class discussion on their predictions and expectations from the text.

Activity #3 – Vengeance and its Toll

Break the class into groups and direct students to identify images in the Manga Classic text where Edmond/The Count carries out part of his plan for vengeance against one of his many enemies. Have them analyze the artwork and explore how the image enhances the text. Direct them to draw an overall conclusion and answer the following prompt:

In the image(s) your team analyzed, explain how the artwork impacts your understanding of and attitude towards the actions within the novel. Does it enhance your appreciation of the story in some way? Explain. If it does not, and your group feels that the images are not effective, explain specifically why and what you might suggest to make it stronger.

Students can share their thoughts to the class as a presentation or a simple discussion.

Activity #4 – Theme Identification

There are a lot of moments where the text foreshadows future events. Select specific points in the novel where the artwork illustrated this theme in a particularly compelling manner. For example:

Page 4 – Table of contents (consider what the chapter names mean and how they hint at future events)

Page 10 – Chapter 1 title (“Conspiracy”)

Page 17 – Fernand’s expression when confronted with Edmond

Page 29 – Abbe Faria’s first appearance Who is he?

Page 42 – Edmond swears vengeance

Page 59 – The Count is born and is the deliverer of divine vengeance

Page 73 – A sinister tale of making amends

Page 83 – Warm air, cold hands

Page 90 – Mercedes sees The Count. Does she know who he really is?

Page 109 – Is the cup poisoned?

Page 121 – Is there love between Haydee and The Count?

Page 138 – The darkened panels – deception!

Page 170 – Edmond’s other aliases

Page 183-184 – Mercedes knows who The Count really is

Page 224 – Princess Haydee

Page 228 – The accusation

Page 249 – The chained images of Edmond with no visible eyes

Page 267 – The calm in the face of real conflict

Page 280 – Danglars finally sees the truth

Page 302 – Valentine must trust The Count with her life

Page 323 – The murderer is revealed!

Page 355-356 – Edmond’s return to his old jail

Page 388-389 – The Count departs – “wait and hope”

Or any others where you feel the artwork creates a visual representation of the idea of foreshadowing within the novel that you find particularly compelling. Have students answer the following question about the image with a short essay:

What elements of the artwork bring a strong understanding of foreshadowing within the novel on the page that text alone could not?

Final Assessment:

The novel explores the sociopolitical attitude in 19th Century France. It touches on the changing political climate after the rule of Napoleon and a divided country trying to repair itself. It also explores how high society worked and what it took to be a part of that world. Each of Edmond's enemies has found a different path to success and it is these components of their lives that he targets. Have students choose one of the three major adversaries in the novel (Danglars, Fernand, or De Villeforte) and trace his path in the novel from his betrayal of Edmond to the final moments of The Count's revenge. Write a short, thesis driven essay that uses the Manga Classic Adaptation as the primary source evidence and explores how the chosen character develops from the beginning of the novel to the end. Be sure to have them include how the graphic adaptation enhances this character arc.

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