

Summer Reading Assignment
10th Grade World Literature – Honors
Timothy Christian School

Read: The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexander Dumas (Bantam Edition preferred)

Background: A popular bestseller since its publication in 1844, *The Count of Monte Cristo* is one of the great page-turning thrillers of all time. Set against the tumultuous years of the post-Napoleonic era, Alexandre Dumas’s grand historical romance recounts the swashbuckling adventures of Edmond Dantès, a dashing young sailor falsely accused of treason. The story of his long imprisonment, dramatic escape, and carefully wrought revenge offers up a vision of France that has become immortal. As Robert Louis Stevenson declared, “I do not believe there is another volume extant where you can breathe the same unmingled atmosphere of romance.”

Directions: Complete Task #1 (Double Entry Journal), Task #2 (Thematic Essay), and Task #3 (Keller’s Response to Dantès).

TASK #1: Write a **double entry journal** featuring a quotation and analysis from each chapter of the story. Focus on choosing and analyzing quotations that reveal aspects of Edmond Dantès’s personality and development as a character. You may also mention how literary elements (such as repetition, irony, foreshadowing, motif, tone, etc.) are employed to contribute to the effect of the story, but focus on how elements contribute to our understanding of Dantès’s sense of feelings, beliefs, and purpose. Use a two-column table with a separate row for each chapter. Ex:

“He was a tall, slender young man, no more than twenty years old, with dark eyes and hair as black as ebony. His whole manner gave evidence of that calmness and resolution peculiar to those who have been accustomed to facing danger ever since their childhood” (1).	In chapter one, Dumas establishes Edmond Dantès by using direct characterization, linking his personal features to his demeanor to contrast the idea that his youth might suggest immaturity. Though twenty years old, Dantès is described as someone with “calmness and resolution,” allowing the reader to see him as a respectable figure while building intrigue about his exploits.
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Tips: In your analysis, avoid saying “In this quotation, Dantès...”; rather, follow the example above which follows my ATP method (Author, Text, Purpose) by mentioning the **author**, identifying short details or words from the **text**, and suggesting the **purpose** of his choices in diction, setting, and characterization (What meaning might he be conveying? Why might he be constructing the text in a particular way?)

TASK #2: In a well-developed **five paragraph essay of not less than four pages**, write an essay in which you introduce a thematic statement of the *Count of Monte Cristo*. Think of this as the moral lesson the work is attempting to convey. What is the author saying about a particular course of action— for example, is revenge ever justified? What is justice? Or even, does revenge bring resolution? In each of your body paragraphs, open with a claim related to the thesis, cite evidence to support your claim, and provide analysis about what Dumas is trying to convey. Close by summarizing your argument and providing lasting thoughts on the work and its message. Use MLA formatting and avoid first and second person pronouns.

TASK #3: How Would Pastor Tim Keller Advise Edmond Dantes? (HONORS)

Widely-known pastor and author Timothy Keller is famous for addressing questions and topics of those who are doubtful, skeptical, or even hostile to Christianity. He attempts to help them reconcile personal beliefs about justice with what they perceive to be Christianity's teachings by clarifying both the Bible and how we understand justice. After reading the excerpt below from Timothy Keller's *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, write a **two-page expository response** analyzing how Timothy Keller would counsel the character of Edmond Dantès from the *Count of Monte Cristo*. What would Keller say to Dantès if Keller were in the place of Abbé Faria? In your response, follow MLA formatting including double-spacing, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and a proper header.

Excerpt from *The Reason for God* by Timothy Keller (pp. 185-188)

“Most of the wrongs done to us cannot be assessed in purely economic terms. Someone may have robbed you of some happiness, reputation, opportunity, or certain aspects of your freedom. No price tag can be put on such things, yet we still have a sense of violated justice that does not go away when the other person says, “I’m really sorry.” When we are seriously wronged we have an indelible sense that the perpetrators have incurred a debt that must be dealt with. Once you have been wronged and you realize there is a just debt that can’t simply be dismissed— there are only two things to do.

The first option is to seek ways to make the perpetrators suffer for what they have done. You can withhold relationship and actively initiate or passively wish for some kind of pain in their lives commensurate to what you experienced. There are many ways to do this. You can viciously confront them, saying things that hurt. You can go around to others to tarnish their reputation. If the perpetrators suffer, you may begin to feel a certain satisfaction, feeling that they are now paying off their debt.

There are some serious problems with this option, however. You may become harder and colder, more self-pitying, and therefore more self-absorbed. If the wrongdoer was a person of wealth or authority you may instinctively dislike and resist that sort of person for the rest of your life. If it was a person of the opposite sex or another race you might become permanently cynical and prejudiced against whole classes of people. In addition, the perpetrator and his friends and family often feel they have the right to respond to your payback in kind. Cycles of reaction and retaliation can go on for years. Evil has been done to you— yes. But when you try to get payment through revenge the evil does not disappear. Instead it spreads, and it spreads most tragically of all into you and your own character.

There is another option, however. You can forgive. Forgiveness means refusing to make them pay for what they did. However, to refrain from lashing out at someone when you want to do so with all your being is agony. It is a form of suffering. You not only suffer the original loss of happiness, reputation, and opportunity, but now you forgo the consolation of inflicting the same on them. You are absorbing the debt, taking the cost of it completely on yourself instead of taking it out of the other person. It hurts terribly. Many people would say it feels like a kind of death.

Yes, but it is a death that leads to resurrection instead of the lifelong living death of bitterness and cynicism. As a pastor I have counseled many people about forgiveness, and I have found that if they do this— if they simply refuse to take vengeance on the wrongdoer in action and even in their inner

fantasies—the anger slowly begins to subside. You are not giving it any fuel and so the resentment burns lower and lower. C. S. Lewis wrote in one of his Letters to Malcolm that “last week, while at prayer, I suddenly discovered—or felt as if I did—that I had really forgiven someone I had been trying to forgive for over thirty years. Trying, and praying that I might.”¹ I remember once counseling a sixteen-year-old girl about the anger she felt toward her father. We weren’t getting anywhere until I said to her, “Your father has defeated you, as long as you hate him. You will stay trapped in your anger unless you forgive him thoroughly from the heart and begin to love him.” Something thawed in her when she realized that. She went through the suffering of costly forgiveness, which at first always feels far worse than bitterness, into eventual freedom. Forgiveness must be granted before it can be felt, but it does come eventually. It leads to a new peace, a resurrection. It is the only way to stop the spread of the evil.

When I counsel forgiveness to people who have been harmed, they often ask about the wrongdoers, “Shouldn’t they be held accountable?” I usually respond, “Yes, but only if you forgive them.” There are many good reasons that we should want to confront wrongdoers. Wrongdoers have inflicted damage and, as in the example of the gate I presented earlier, it costs something to fix the damage. We should confront wrongdoers—to wake them up to their real character, to move them to repair their relationships, or to at least constrain them and protect others from being harmed by them in the future. Notice, however, that all those reasons for confrontation are reasons of love. The best way to love them and the other potential victims around them is to confront them in the hope that they will repent, change, and make things right.

The desire for vengeance, however, is motivated not by goodwill but by ill will. You may say, “I just want to hold them accountable,” but your real motivation may be simply to see them hurt. If you are not confronting them for their sake or for society’s sake but for your own sake, just for payback, the chance of the wrongdoer ever coming to repentance is virtually nil. In such a case you, the confronter, will overreach, seeking not justice but revenge, not their change but their pain. Your demands will be excessive and your attitude abusive. He or she will rightly see the confrontation as intended simply to cause hurt. A cycle of retaliation will begin.

Only if you first seek inner forgiveness will your confrontation be temperate, wise, and gracious. Only when you have lost the need to see the other person hurt will you have any chance of actually bringing about change, reconciliation, and healing. You have to submit to the costly suffering and death of forgiveness if there is going to be any resurrection.”