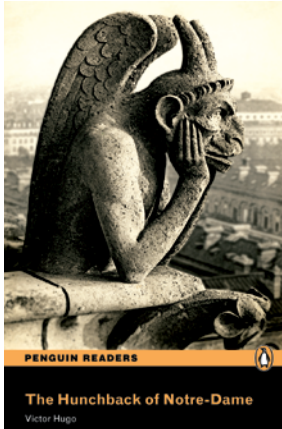




The Hunchback of Notre-Dame

Victor Hugo



Summary

The story is set in fifteenth century Paris. The priest of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Claude Frollo, is strongly attracted to Esmeralda, a gypsy girl he sees dancing in the street. He and his faithful, hunchbacked bell-ringer, Quasimodo, try to kidnap her, but she is rescued by a handsome army officer, Phoebus de Châteaupers. Esmeralda mistakenly falls in love with his bravery, although he is in reality just a good-looking rogue. Frollo follows Phoebus to a meeting with Esmeralda. He stabs Phoebus and leaves Esmeralda to be sentenced to death for his murder.

Quasimodo, who has become her effective slave due to a single act of kindness, rescues her and takes her to sanctuary in the cathedral. He protects her from the unwelcome attentions of Frollo and from a band of gypsies who attack the cathedral and whom he mistakenly believes are trying to harm her. Frollo tricks Esmeralda into leaving the cathedral and Quasimodo's protection. After a brief reunion with her mother, she is arrested and hanged in front of the cathedral. Quasimodo pushes Frollo to his death from the cathedral roof. Years later, the hunchback's skeleton is discovered embracing the remains of Esmeralda in her grave.

Background and themes

Loyalty in various guises steers much of the novel's plot. Quasimodo's intense loyalty to Claude Frollo initially prevents the hunchback from perceiving his master's madness and when he does understand, following Frollo's attempted rape of Esmeralda, Quasimodo is powerless to harm him. In the end, however, the loyalty Quasimodo

feels towards Esmeralda (the only other person besides Frollo to show him kindness) trumps his loyalty to his master and he pushes Frollo from the parapet to his death. Many of the characters are bound to someone or something by loyalty and the instances where they break that tie figure prominently in the story. For example, Esmeralda is loyal to her virtue because she believes that so long as she is virtuous her amulet has the power to restore her mother. She is willing to sacrifice her virtue to Phoebus, however, and her blind love for the handsome soldier leads to her destruction. Similarly, Frollo abandons his brother in order to pursue his passion for Esmeralda. This decision leads to Jehan's dramatic death and only serves to drive Frollo further from the bounds of sanity.

True love Different characters show love to others in many ways. There are people whose love is generous and true while there are others whose love is harmful to the people they love.

Duality Opposing elements can be found all over the story:

Good and evil Throughout the story we find these two elements in the characters. In every character, there's something good and something evil as well.

Life and death What means life to somebody is death to somebody else.

Love and hate With the exception of Quasimodo, who is depicted as less human than the others, every important character shows these two opposing feelings, which run through the whole story.

Difference and tolerance People are not ready to accept differences, which they consider to be evil.

Abandonment Quasimodo was abandoned by his mother, he's then abandoned by Pâquette and finally he's abandoned by society.

Outsiders Some people do not fit society, or rather, society doesn't accept them as is the case of Quasimodo and Esmeralda.

Deafness It is depicted not only physically but as the difficulty human beings have to listen to others.

Deceit No one confesses their true feelings towards others, with the exception of Esmeralda and Quasimodo.



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Discussion activities

Introduction – Chapter 1

Before reading

1 Discuss: Talk about beauty and our bodies

Guide the discussion with these questions: *How do people feel about people who look different? Can they find a job easily?*

2 Research: Notre-Dame

Get students to find information about the cathedral. Guide them with these questions: *What is Notre-Dame? Where is it? Who built it? When was it built? What style does it have? Are there any other famous churches in other cities in the world? What is the equivalent of Notre-Dame in your country?*

3 Predict: Have students read the words in italics on page v and ask them to predict why Quasimodo couldn't live in the outside world.**4 Discuss: A prison and a sanctuary**

Have students read page v and discuss this question: *How is a sanctuary a prison too? Compare them. Think of other places that can be a prison for a person.*

5 Discuss: The romantic period

Have students look up information about the characteristics of this period in literature and the arts.

6 Predict: Have students read the title of Chapter 1. What surprises can they think of? Make a list and then go back to it to check students' predictions.**7 Discuss: Christmas**

Have students discuss these questions: *Do people celebrate Christmas in your country? If they do, how? Is it the same as or different from the celebrations in the book?*

8 Discuss: The man in a long coat

Ask students to read the description of the man on page 4. Then ask them these questions: *Who's this man? What does he do for a living? Why is he there? Why doesn't he enjoy Esmeralda's dance?*

9 Discuss: Esmeralda

What information can we get about her? What information shows she's evil?

10 Discuss: Good and Evil

Ask students to make a list of elements in the story so far which they consider evil.

11 Discuss: The City of Thieves

Have students discuss this world. *In what way is it different from the rest of the city of Paris?*

After reading

12 Discuss: Stereotypes.

Have students discuss different stereotypes and people's prejudices. You can give them some ideas from the book: gypsies, ugly people.

Chapter 2

Before reading

13 Predict:

Have students read the title and predict what is going to happen.

14 Discuss: Good and evil

Have students discuss what's evil in the characters of Frollo, Esmeralda and Quasimodo.

After reading

15 Predict: What's going to happen between Esmeralda and Quasimodo? What's going to happen to Sachtette?**16 Role play:** Students role play the conversation between the two ladies on page 16. Invite students to include more questions.

Chapter 3

Before reading

17 Predict: Students read the title of the chapter and predict what evil thoughts and actions they will read about. You can help them with this chart:

| Character | Evil thought | Evil action |
|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| Frollo | | |
| Quasimodo | | |
| Esmeralda | | |

After reading

18 Write: Have students imagine they're Phoebus. They write a letter to a friend telling him/her about the relationship he has with Fleur de Lys.**19 Discuss: Fleur's diary**

Have students imagine the following situation: *You are Fleur de Lys. Phoebus has just left. You're not happy because he's bored with you. Write your thoughts and feelings.*

20 Discuss: Esmeralda and Phoebus

Encourage students to tell you what happens between Esmeralda and Phoebus when he follows her out of Fleur de Lys's house.

21 Discuss: Strange relationships

Have students discuss these questions: *Why does Frollo say Esmeralda is dangerous? What is Esmeralda's secret? Why is she afraid of the priest? Why does she repeat the word 'Phoebus'? Why are Frollo's eyes wild when he talks about Esmeralda?*

22 Discuss: Father Frollo

Ask students to answer these questions: *Are his words true? Is he looking for a gypsy girl? What is his real interest in Esmeralda?*

23 Discuss: Esmeralda's bag

Have students discuss possible answers: *What does she have in her bag? What promise will she break? Why will she break it? Why doesn't she need a father or a mother if she has Phoebus?*



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Chapter 4

Before reading

24 Guess: Ask students to read the name of the chapter and guess whose heart it is.

After reading

25 Discuss: Father Frollo

Have students make a list of adjectives and feelings associated with the priest while he's talking with Esmeralda in her cell.

26 Pair work: Madame Falourdel

Ask students to answer these questions about this woman: *What does she look like? What is she wearing? What is her life like? Where's her family?* Then they can write her description.

Chapter 4

Before reading

27 Guess: Ask students these questions to predict what is going to happen: *Is Father Frollo going to talk to the Judge? Is he going to say he has killed Phoebus? Will Esmeralda say she's innocent? Why (not)?*

After reading

28 Read carefully: Ask students to read the section again and look for "opposites" or examples of duality. You can give them an example, e.g. *The Judge must protect people, but he lies to Esmeralda about Phoebus's death.*

29 Discuss: Sanctuary

Ask students to discuss how a sanctuary can be a prison to some people. You can give them an example, e.g. *A sanctuary can be a prison because you cannot leave.*

30 Complete: Ask students to think of possible dangers, as in the example: *Father Frollo can get into Esmeralda's room.*

Chapter 5

Before reading

31 Guess: Ask students to read the title and predict which characters will be together in death.

32 Guess: Ask students to read up to the end of the section on page 44 and discuss what's going to happen. You can guide them with these questions: *Who has taken Esmeralda? Where is she? Is she going to die?* You can tell students to go back to their predictions in Activity 31 and see if they would change anything.

33 Guess: Have students read up to the end of the second section on page 47 and predict what's going to happen. You can guide them with these prompts: *If Sachette sees Esmeralda is her daughter ... If Sachette doesn't see Esmeralda is her daughter ...*

After reading

34 Discuss: The ending

Is the ending happy or sad? Is it the same for all the people in the story?

35 Guess: Ask students to go back to the title of Chapter 5. Which characters does it refer to?

36 Group work: Students get into groups and prepare a party for the following guests:

Father Frollo, Quasimodo, Pierre Gringoire, Esmeralda, Phoebus de Châteaupers, Mahiette, Fleur-de-Lys and Sachette.

Seat the guests around a table so that each one sits between people they will be friendly with.

37 Pair work and role play:

Student A: You work for the government. Tell Father Frollo why you think Quasimodo would be happier in a school for people with special difficulties.

Student B: You are Father Frollo. Explain why you think Quasimodo would be happier staying with you in the cathedral.

38 Pair work:

Have one student go to the word list and mime one of the items on the lists. The other student has to guess the word.

39 Discuss: In pairs or in groups, have students talk about the following:

- Who is the worst person in the story? Why?
- Is Esmeralda right to choose death and not Father Frollo?
- Why does Father Frollo want the gypsies to attack the cathedral?
- Is Father Frollo an evil man?
- How does Quasimodo feel when he kills Father Frollo? Why?
- Do you think the people of Paris are cruel?

40 Discuss: Honest hearts

Have students answer this question: *Whose hearts are honest? Why?*

41 Discuss: Good vs. Evil

Have students make a list of characters who are evil, those who are good and those who are neither evil nor good.

42 Discuss: Justice

Have students discuss if there's justice in the book and if so, if it's the same for all the characters.

43 Discuss: Loyalty

Have students discuss who in the story are loyal to others and never betray their principles.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.