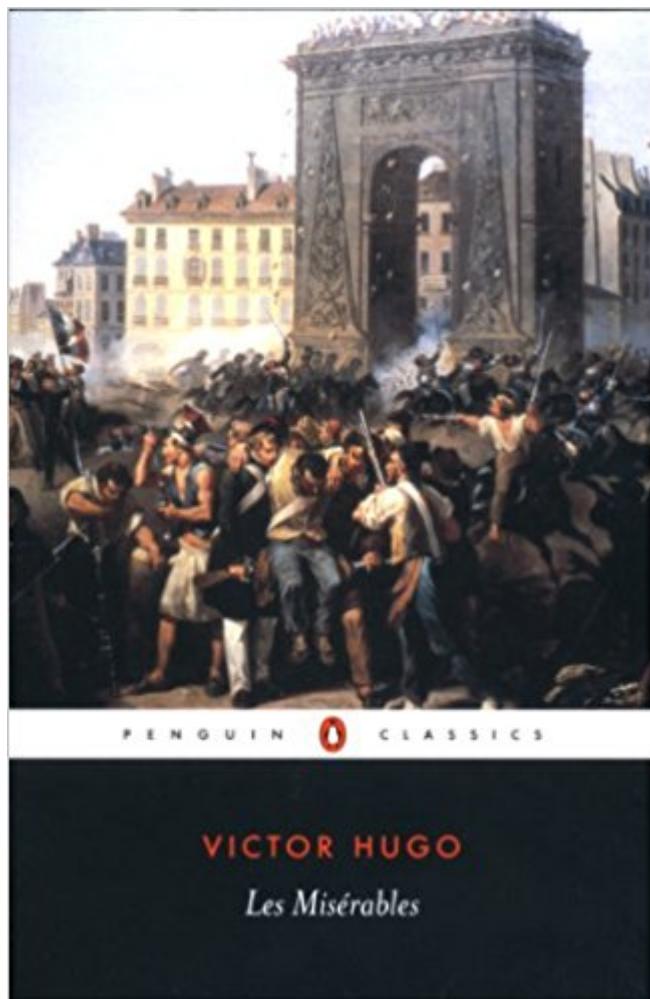


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# Les Miserables (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

"He was no longer Jean Valjean, but No. 24601" Victor Hugo's tale of injustice, heroism and love follows the fortunes of Jean Valjean, an escaped convict determined to put his criminal past behind him. But his attempts to become a respected member of the community are constantly put under threat: by his own conscience, when, owing to a case of mistaken identity, another man is arrested in his place; and by the relentless investigations of the dogged policeman Javert. It is not simply for himself that Valjean must stay free, however, for he has sworn to protect the baby daughter of Fantine, driven to prostitution by poverty. A compelling and compassionate view of the victims of early nineteenth-century French society, *Les Misérables* is a novel on an epic scale, moving inexorably from the eve of the battle of Waterloo to the July Revolution of 1830. Norman Denny's introduction to his lively English translation discusses Hugo's political and artistic aims in writing *Les Misérables*. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Hugo's genius was for the creation of simple and recognizable myth. The huge success of *Les Misérables* as a didactic work on behalf of the poor and oppressed is due to his poetic and myth-enlarged view of human nature." *V. S. Pritchett* "It was Tolstoy who vindicated [Hugo's] early ambition by judging *Les Misérables* one of the world's great novels, if not the greatest." [His] ability to present the extremes of experience 'as they are' is, in the end, Hugo's great gift." *From the Introduction by Peter Washington*

Text: English (translation) Original Language: French

I advise those perusing these reviews to take with a measure of salt the dogmatic pronunciations on the quality of Rose's translation. Provenance is important, and one should always "consider the source." (Yes, even with me.) A number of interviews with Rose are available online, in which she discusses her work, and her work on this novel. The novel has a lengthy and detailed Translator's Preface, in which she discusses the novel, the translation process, and her approach to it. You also can find online some independent articles about this translation. The great translator of Spanish language literature, Edith Grossman, said: "I can't say what makes a book translatable, but I do think that all texts can be translated. The question of whether or not a work is "translatable" stems from a mistaken and widely held notion that a translation is really a one-for-one set of equivalences with the original--a straightforward lexical problem--when in fact it is a rewriting of the first text. Some, of course, are immensely difficult (they're usually just as difficult in the original) and challenge the translator's sensitivity to nuance, levels of meaning, and artistic impact in both languages. I see my work as translating meaning, not words." Rose has spoken similarly about her work. "I think the essential difference is that...and I'm not saying that translators always have to do this, there are reasons for departing a little bit further from a writer's text where it just won't work in English. I found on the contrary what really worked better in English was to follow Hugo much more closely than anyone else seems to have done. So I've actually followed his syntax as closely as possible, I've followed the rhythm of his sentences and I've actually broken it up the way he has and stuck more closely to what he says." -- Julie Rose, interview, 2009 She's translated more than thirty French works into English -- plays, poetry, novels, genre fiction. She worked on *Les Misérables* for three years. She has been awarded three international prizes for her translations. I'm willing to take the leap of faith -- she is "fluent in French." I recommend others accept the facts in plain sight, and do likewise. I stopped reading works in translation in the early 1980s, and didn't start up again until around 2005. The reason I stopped was that I concluded that I could not hear the author's voice in

the translated work. The reason I started again was that Rose, Grossman, and some others showed that they understood this challenge, accepted it, and that it is possible to capture the author's voice in a translation, by actually listening to the author's intent. According to one account, the Rose translation is almost 100,000 words longer than the 1976 Denny "translation" -- that's how much material he excised from the novel to "improve it." Denny, in fact, is on record as saying that Victor Hugo was a terrible writer, and needed some "tidying up." If you're just looking to pad your reading CV with another of the "great books," then it doesn't matter which one you read. Might as well go with a shorter one. If you're looking to read the translation of *Les Mis*, that will make you feel like you are reading the original, hearing Victor Hugo's voice, then pick up Rose's translation.

I wish I could remember who convinced me to read this, as I would fall on my knees and thank them. It is long, but that only prolongs the joy of the novel, of the history, the arcane argot, and the love between the father and his adopted daughter. I always liked the musical, but had never thought that I would like the book just as much. Two months later I can go back to riding the subway without having a *les mis* song stuck in my head from reading this book.

A long but great read. Hugo's story of the sinner who became a saint through the kindness of a holy Bishop, the escaped convict dogged by the policeman Javert has been beloved for over a hundred years. A number of movies have been made from the book perhaps none better than the Fredrick March/Charles Laughton version. The book is a long read with many digressions, but that is part of its charm. We learn about Waterloo and the patois of the Paris underworld of the early 18th century and we follow the convict, Valjean, the orphan, Cossette, the young bohemian, Marius and live their pain, passions and joy. It is worth the time and effort to read this true classic. The Norman Denny translation is excellent but the scanning and OCR leave a bit to be desired. The word "die" is often printed as "the". A company like Penguin should have better copyediting. Thus the 4 stars when the story deserves 5 stars.

This has no audio attached. Only reason I purchased it

*les miserables* by victor hugo - wow - long book, great movie with huge jackman is wonderful - its a book on the boy who stole a loaf of bread to save his sister and her family from death and how he was a convicted criminal and did a 360 degree turn around and became a mayor of a big town and fought in a power battle for the poor people and their rights etc and changed the way the country

sees the the poor and helpless - its rich vs poor issues its great - so like today in many ways the poor have it toady

Around Christmas I saw the movie adaptation of this novel. While it was generally well presented, I was then determined to go ahead and read the book. I knew it was nearly 1500 pages in length unabridged, but I would have it no other way. Yes, Victor Hugo wrote a lot about the state of society in France, particularly the legal system and the nature of man. He definitely had no love for monarchy, thus he was a deeply avowed republican in the classical sense. Of particular note was his description of the Battle of Waterloo, he had a keen sense of what transpired. The book is FAR better than the movie. The character development is superb. I really felt for Jean Valjean and, in the end, for Javert. Fantine was truly a tragic figure, Hugo provided an extensive back story for her that did not really show in the film. Such media has its limitations, granted. The book was fantastic in bringing the situations to life. I felt like I was in that factory, in that cold outside of the inn, like I was being hunted down by Javert and ending up in that convent. The barricades of 1832, it felt like I was there with them, so outstanding is the narrative. Yes, this is a novel to be savored. It really made me think and I am better for having read it.

One of the great classic stories of all time. Themes of justice and forgiveness are embodied in the most believeable characters, and cover individual as well as civic actions. Consideration of different kinds of love - parental, romantic, and the general love of mankind - are interwoven with the primary themes to give them a human dimension. I try and read it at least once every 5 years and am always surprised by new insights I get.

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