**Overview**

**About the Author**

Alexandre Dumas (1802 – 1870) was born on July 23, 1802, to Thomas-Alexandre Dumas and his wife, Marie-Louise Elisabeth. His father had served as a general under Napoleon but had fallen out of favor with him. The elder Dumas died when Alexandre was four, leaving him and his mother with limited resources. A local priest provided Dumas with limited education, and Dumas left for Paris when he was twenty-one. He launched a successful career as a writer and wrote prolifically throughout his life.

**Point of View:** third-person omniscient

**Setting:** France, 1800s

**Themes**: vengeance, greed, love, power

**Summary**

A young French sailor, Edmond Dantes, is falsely accused of treason and imprisoned for 14 years. After his miraculous escape, he finds hidden treasure and returns to France as the wealthy and prestigious Count of Monte Cristo. He implements plans for retribution on those who betrayed him, believing that he is God’s instrument of vengeance. After he goes beyond the limits of rightful retaliation, he realizes that supreme power and wisdom are in God’s hands alone.

**Background Information**

Source for Story

Dumas based his protagonist, Edmond Dantes, i.e. the Count of Monte Cristo, on a true story he heard about a cobbler who was wrongfully imprisoned for seven years. After his release, the cobbler tracked down and killed each one of his enemies.

Historical Background

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 – 1821) was Italian by birth and entered the royal military school at Paris when a young boy. He was involved in the French Revolution which broke out in 1789. After varied military assignments and alliances, Napoleon eventually was named to command of the French Army of Italy. In 1799, he seized power in France and in 1804, crowned himself Emperor of the French, established a new government of three members called the Consulate, and became First Consul, dictator of France. Napoleon was exiled to, and became the ruler of, the tiny island of Elba off the coast of Italy. In February 1815, he sailed from Elba with 1100 followers and began a march to Paris, where he was again hailed as emperor. This began his reign of “The Hundred Days,” which ended with his defeat at Waterloo in June 1815. He was exiled to Saint Helen and died there in 1821. A follower of Napoleon was called a Bonapartist. Dumas’ father was a general in Napoleon’s army, and the character Noirtier in the novel is apparently patterned after Dumas’ father.

The Reign of Terror revers to the French Revolution under the Jacobin government who established a policy of terror against revels, supporters of the king; 18,000 death sentences were carried out, including that of Marie Antoinette.

Marseilles is the oldest and second largest city in France. It is also the country’s main seaport.

Monte Cristo is a small Italian island in the Mediterranean Sea, comprised primarily of a mountain of granite that rises 2,000 feet above sea level. Benedictine monks once had a monastery there.

**Glossary of Titles**

1. Count: nobleman equal in rank to an English earl
2. Countess: wife of a count
3. Viscount: English nobleman ranking next below an earl and above a baron; usually the son of an earl
4. Comte: a count
5. Comtesse: a countess
6. Baron: nobleman of lowest hereditary rank; next below a Viscount
7. Baroness: wife or widow of a baron
8. Marquis: nobleman ranking below a duke or above an earl or count
9. Marquise: wife or widow of a marquis