

level
B1.2

READING ACTIVITY 1/6



LES MISÉRABLES

INTRODUCTION

Les Misérables is Victor Hugo's (1802 – 1885) great masterpiece, published in 1862. It is one of the best-known works of 19th century literature and has inspired plays, films and musicals. Set in 19th-century France, this is the story of Jean Valjean, a man who leaves prison after a nineteen-year sentence. What does the future hold for him? He is insulted and rejected by everyone he meets, until something happens that will change his life forever. Victor Hugo's intricate masterpiece explores the world of the unfortunate victims of poverty and social injustice in 19th-century France.

PREDICTION – WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Are the following sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Jean Valjean is old and very ugly. | <input type="checkbox"/> T | <input type="checkbox"/> F |
| 2. Jean Valjean served a nineteen-year sentence because he murdered someone. | <input type="checkbox"/> T | <input type="checkbox"/> F |
| 3. Jean Valjean meets people who will help him. | <input type="checkbox"/> T | <input type="checkbox"/> F |
| 4. Jean Valjean will be able to help others who are unfortunate victims of social injustice. | <input type="checkbox"/> T | <input type="checkbox"/> F |
| 5. Jean Valjean will take part in a rebellion. | <input type="checkbox"/> T | <input type="checkbox"/> F |

Mark your answers and when you finish reading the story, check them to see if you predicted correctly.



level
B1.2

READING ACTIVITY 2/6



READING ACTIVITY

Part 1 – Read the excerpt and then do the activities below.

■ This is the very beginning of the story.

One evening in October 1815, a man with a long beard and torn clothes walked into the town of Digne. He was in his late forties, of medium height and had a strong body. His face was tired and sunburnt, and he carried a large wooden stick. A heavy soldier's bag was on his back.

The townspeople, who had never seen him before, watched him with interest as he stopped at the fountain for some water. He then crossed the square and walked into an inn.

'What can I do for you, sir?' asked the innkeeper without looking at him.

'A meal and a bed,' said the stranger.

'Of course,' said the innkeeper, who turned and looked at him. The innkeeper saw his rough appearance and added, 'If you can pay for it.'

'I have money,' the stranger showed him an old leather purse.

'Show me your passport,' said the innkeeper.

The stranger took a yellow passport out of his pocket. As soon as the innkeeper saw the yellow passport, which was only given to ex-convicts, he exclaimed 'You can't stay here! You've just come out of prison. I don't want people like you here!'

The stranger got up, took his bag and stick and left. It was getting dark and a cold wind was blowing from the east. He lay down on a stone bench near a church.

1 **workhouse** : a place where very poor people live.

2 **porridge** : warm breakfast food made with cereal and milk or water.



READING ACTIVITY

3/6



ODD ONE OUT!

2A. Choose the word that does not belong to the group.

1. inn home cottage castle
2. height length width measurement
3. strong robust vigorous weak
4. bag purse wallet box
5. breakfast lunch meal dinner
6. speak exclaim shout cry

2B. Complete the sentences with the odd words.

1. He wanted to eat a because he was hungry.
2. They can French well.
3. He took the of the long room before buying the furniture.
4. The children put the toys in the big
5. The tourists slept at the after the long trip.
6. The old man was ill and, and couldn't walk.

QUICK QUIZ!

3. Match the words with their opposites.

- | | | |
|------------|-------|--------------|
| 1. clean | | a. cruel |
| 2. safe | | b. light |
| 3. kind | | c. dirty |
| 4. poor | | d. build |
| 5. destroy | | e. rich |
| 6. ugly | | f. dangerous |
| 7. dark | | g. beautiful |

level
B1.2

READING ACTIVITY

4/6



PART 2

Read the excerpt and then do the activity below.

The stranger got up from the stone bench and went to knock on the bishop's¹ door.

'Come in,' said the bishop.

The stranger walked in and the bishop looked at his unexpected visitor kindly.

'My name is Jean Valjean,' said the stranger before the bishop could speak. 'I've been in prison for nineteen years, and they let me out four days ago. I've been walking all day and nobody in this town will give me food or a place to sleep. A woman told me to come here. I've money. Will you let me stay?'

The bishop looked at Mrs Magloire, the old servant, and said, 'Please prepare another place at the table for this gentleman.'

Jean Valjean was surprised and said, 'Perhaps you don't understand. I've spent five years in prison at the Bagn of Toulon for robbery and another fourteen years for trying to escape four times. I'm a dangerous man!'

'Mrs Magloire,' said the bishop calmly. 'please put clean sheets on the bed in the spare room.'

Mrs Magloire, who was an obedient servant, left the room without saying a word.

The bishop looked at the man and said, 'Sit down and warm yourself by the fire. Dinner will soon be ready.'

Jean Valjean's face, which had been angry, suddenly softened. 'You'll let me stay?' he asked, his voice trembling. 'I can pay you.'

'Of course you can stay,' replied the bishop, 'and you can keep your money.'

1 **bishop** : an important religious person in the Christian Church.



level
B1.2

READING ACTIVITY 5/6



4. Choose the correct answer—a, b or c.

- How many days had Jean Valjean been out of prison?
 - one day
 - four days
 - fourteen days
- Who told Jean Valjean to go to the bishop?
 - Mrs Magloire
 - the innkeeper
 - a woman
- How many times did Jean Valjean try to escape from prison?
 - four times
 - five times
 - none
- Where did the bishop tell Jean Valjean to sit?
 - in the spare room
 - at the dinner table
 - by the fire

VIDEO QUICK QUIZ!

5. Watch the video (<https://youtu.be/zHrNCxdqm2E>) and do the activities below.

Do you know the nations and their nationalities? Complete the table below. The first is done for you.

NATION	NATIONALITY
0. France	French
1. Spain
2. Greece
3. Ireland
4. Austria
5. Germany
6. Denmark
7. Hungary
8. Belgium

