THE POVERTY IN FRANCE IN THE EARLY 1800’S AS DEPICTED IN FANTINE IN VICTOR HUGO’S 
LES MISERABLES NOVEL

A SARJANA PENDIDIKAN THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Sarjana Pendidikan Degree in English Language Education

By
Paulus Tri Nugroho Putro
Student Number: 101214157

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
YOGYAKARTA
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A Sarjana Pendidikan Thesis on

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Yogyakarta, June 10, 2015
Faculty of Teachers Training and Education
Sanata Dharma University
Dean

Rohandi, Ph.D.
The only person standing in your way is “you” (The Black Swan)

I dedicated this thesis to my beloved parents and the people who are supporting me until now
STATEMENT OF WORK’S ORIGINALITY

I honestly declare that this thesis, which I have written, does not contain the work or parts of the work of other people, except those cited in the quotations and the references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, June 10th, 2015

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ABSTRACT


This thesis analyzed poverty in Europe in the early 1800’s as experienced by Fantine in Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables* novel. Fantine is a young woman with a child who is left by her husband and must struggle in poverty to barely survive.

There is one research problem in this thesis: How is the poverty of early 19th century described through Fantine in the novel. This thesis was written in order to find out the poverty described and experienced by Fantine, one of the main characters in the novel, and how she struggles to survive through the poverty.

Theory that was implemented in this thesis is the theory of poverty. The critical theory approach was used in this thesis to get information about the character’s behavior which was severely affected by the socioeconomic condition in France in the 1800’s. Primary data of this study was a novel entitled *Les Miserables* written by Victor Hugo while the secondary sources were literary books, and related journals.

The finding of this thesis was concluded as follows. The description and experience of how she struggled to survive through the poverty as seen in Fantine can simply be described as extremely poor, despicably abject, and completely miserable.

**Keywords**: *Les Miserables*, Fantine, poverty, Post-French Revolution
ABSTRAK


Skripsi ini menganalisis kemiskinan yang terjadi pada awal tahun 1800-an yang dialami oleh Fantine seperti digambarkan oleh Victor Hugo dalam novel Les Miserables. Fantine adalah seorang wanita muda yang memiliki seorang anak kecil yang ditinggalkan oleh suaminya dan dia harus berusaha keras untuk bertahan hidup ketika kemiskinan menghimpitnya.


Temuan dalam skripsi ini disimpulkan sebagai berikut. Gambaran dan pengalaman bagaimana dia berjuang untuk bertahan hidup dalam kemiskinan yang dialami oleh Fantine bisa dengan mudah digambarkan sebagai berikut. Dia menjadi lebih miskin, dia harus menyerahkan segalanya agar bisa bertahan hidup, dan dia menjadi lebih menderita.

Keywords: Les Miserables, Fantine, poverty, Post-French Revolution
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I would also like to thank my proofreader for his willingness to proofread my thesis in the very last minute. I am so glad and grateful that Pak Ouda introduced him to me. He helped me so much and I do appreciate his effort and struggle in proofreading my imperfect thesis to be better thesis.

At last, my greatest gratitude goes to my friends whom I cannot mention one by one for always being there for me and accept me for who I am, I cannot thank them enough for their presence in my life. I would also like to thank the haters for insulting me, hating me, and whatever they do to take me down. Their insults, their hates are making me stronger day by day.

Paulus Tri Nugroho Putro
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this research discusses the introductory part of the thesis. It consists of five parts; that is the background of the study, the problem formulation, the objectives of the study, the benefits of the study, and the definition of terms.

The background gives the explanation about the topic of this study, namely the poverty in the Post-French Revolution era. The problem formulation discusses one major question to be answered related to the research. The objective of the study discusses how to discover the answers of the questions stated in the problem formulation. The benefits of the study discuss the contribution of the conducted study for Sanata Dharma University and for the development of research knowledge.

1.1 Background of the Study

The French Revolution happened in France from 1789 until 1799. The effects of the French Revolution were a financial crisis following two expensive wars and years of failed harvests. Because of the expensive wars, high taxation was charged to the people and at that time France experienced bad harvests thus income was low. Wilcox (1969) states, “Poverty may be caused, finally, by inflation. As prices rise, real income falls. This condition too, is a development that the individual cannot control” (p. 35). Causes mentioned by Wilcox were
social factors. From those causes, we know that the French people met many challenges to survive during these difficult times.

Wicaksono (2005) states that the French Revolution also creates an unevenness of wealth distribution between the rich and the poor. That kind of condition certainly made the people who lived at the time challenged during this difficult time of social upheaval and poverty (p. 1). The impact of this kind of situation was that, the rich had more power than the poor. This marginalization is particularly shown in one graphic scene from the novel when there was a rich man who propositioned to have sex with Fantine who had to work to support her child a prostitute after she lost her previous job. When Fantine rejected the rich man’s aggression by scratching his face, he then reported what Fantine had done to the police officer, Javert. From this scene, the writer portrays that the rich always having the power to do whatever they want to.

The extreme poverty conditions following the French Revolution influenced many writers to write and to explore these pathetic conditions through their literary works. This approach is quite understandable because at that time, they did not dare to show their dissatisfaction openly and since they did not have the freedom to do so. Literature became the perfect way to show their dissatisfaction safely as they reacted to the impact of the French Revolution especially in the humanity aspect. The dilemma followed the cliché that the rich people became richer and the poor people became poorer.

The poverty condition in France in the eighteenth century is quite similar if we compare it with the economic condition in Indonesia nowadays. Indonesia is
not poor country, but Indonesia is still fighting with poverty, malnutrition, and children who cannot go to school because they do not have enough money to pay the school tuition. There are still many children who have to drop out of school because they do not have enough money to continue their school and then they have to work to support the family’s economy. Children who do not get good nutrition food because their parents do not have enough money to buy some, so they can get sick easily. The Indonesian government is trying to solve this problem by increasing health system in this country so the poor can get better treatment to increase their health.

Literature has many branches. One of them is novel. Novel has a close relationship to human life. We can get a lot of experiences by reading a novel, for example about human characters, human cultures, human expressions, and human struggles to survive in their lives. Some authors have written about human relationships and the social life people have while others have written about human’s love relationship such as a relationship between an intimate couple or platonic relationships such as friends, family and colleagues. One of the most famous Romantic writers is Victor Hugo, who is one of the best known French writers of the eighteenth century.

Victor Hugo was born in 1802 at Besacon, France. He wrote Romantic costume dramas, many volumes of lyrical and satirical verse, political treatises and other journalistic publications, criticisms and several novels, the best known of which are Les Miserables (1862) and the youthful Notre Dame de Paris (1831). After he became committed social democrat during the Second Empire of
Napoleon Bonaparte III, he was exiled from France, and lived in the Channel Islands. He returned to Paris in 1870 and remained a great public figure until his death in 1885.

*Les Miserables* is a romantic story which is set in the post-French Revolution period. Although it is considered as a romantic story, the novel cannot be separated from the country’s condition at that time. When the income was low because of bad harvests, and two expensive wars depleted the country financially, big differences developed between the rich and the poor, resulting in widespread crime, poverty, malnutrition, and starvation. Most condemned criminals were someone who had to steal a loaf of bread because his or her family was starving. The novel keenly portrays this time of poverty and bad economy when, the character Jean Valjean and his family are starving and he had to steal a loaf of bread because his sister’s child was about to die. He was immediately imprisoned with a little hope of parole, since the Republican politicians of that time had no sympathy for the poor.

In fact, French Revolution did not only bring big change to the country’s economy but also a bad effect the morals of the country. This novel depicts a miserable situation in the early 1800’s in France where most of the people were poor and they were suffering because they were starving. In the example where Jean Valjean was imprisoned, he was forced to become a slave simply because he stole food to feed his sister’s almost dead child. The point of view of the people about prostitutes was also very low, as was shown in the novel when Fantine’s friends accused her of becoming a prostitute. They continued telling these lies
until finally she lost her job and because she had nothing left, she sold her hair, her teeth and did become a prostitute to pay the debt she had for the care of her daughter, Cosette. Since her husband had left them she had to be a single parent and sole provider for Cosette her only child by any and all means.

In this thesis, the writer will explore the effect of the extreme poverty on the people in France at that time. In Toward Social Welfare written by Clair Wilcox (1969), she states that,

“Poverty has serious economic costs. It makes for ill health. The darkness and dampness of slum dwellings-the lack of fresh air and sunlight-contribute to respiratory diseases. Inadequate provision for sanitation and for the storage of food cause digestive ailments. Overcrowding and lack of immunization promote the spread of epidemics. Malnutrition causes skeletal and organic damage, checks growth in height and weight, and lowers resistance to disease. The poor are too sick more often and are afflicted more commonly with acute and chronic diseases than are members of the upper income groups. Ill health, in turn, results in impairment of strength and vitality” (p. 37).

1.2 Problem Formulation

The following is the question that the writer formulated in this research to be analyzed using the Critical Theory approach. The question is:

How is the poverty of early 1800’s in France described through Fantine in the novel?
1.3 Objective of the Study

This study has one objective, which is to find out how is the poverty in the early 1800’s in France described through the character of Fantine in the novel.

1.4 Benefits of the Study

This thesis may give some benefits to the readers. Therefore, this study states four benefits of the study, which the writer has already determined. First, for the readers, this thesis is expected to be a guide to understand the story, *Les Miserables* in the form of novel, which was written by Victor Hugo. This thesis can help the readers to understand what the author is trying to portray, including the poverty conditions after the French Revolution. As a result, readers can have a clearer image about the story, the setting, and the fictitious events that happened in the novel.

Second, for the English teachers of Romantic literature, this thesis will be beneficial since it is a literature thesis, and it can provide a reference in teaching about this literary genre especially *Les Miserables* to their students. The object that the writer expects to emphasize is the Play Performance class. Since it is already in the form of a play and movie, the students can use the drama as a reference or they can make an adaptation based on this novel. The students can decide whether they will make it more challenging by including singing which requires longer time to practice and create a performance or they could just perform it without singing.
Third, for the researchers who are interested in literature, especially in the genre of the novel, this study can also provide guidance for the future researchers who can use this thesis as a reference for their studies or encourage critical judgment to achieve their research goals in their studies.

Literature study is very useful for the readers and also for the researchers because from the literature, the researchers can use other people’s ideas as guidance or a reference in their study. For the readers, literature can enrich their knowledge in setting, characters, and story ideas through literary work in the form of novel, movie, and poetry. Literature study also helps the readers to better understand about the literary work.

1.5 Definition of Terms

In analyzing this novel, there are three terms that the writer would like to explain in order to avoid misconception and to provide an accurate analysis.

1. Poverty

According to Wilcox (1969), “Poverty may be defined either in relative or in absolute terms. It has been proposed, for instance, that families in the bottom quintile of income scale or families getting less than half of the median family income be defined as poor. Poverty, it is said is a matter of social status. If one man gets less than another, he feels that he is poor; and if he feels poor, he is poor.” (p. 25).
2. Inequality

Wilcox (1969) states that “The extent of inequality has varied from place to place and from time to time. In some cases, the disparity has been extreme: the rich living at the height of luxury, the poor enduring the deepest misery. Sometimes, the disparity has been moderate, with no one enjoying great luxury, and no one condemned to misery. But even then wealth may be distributed unequally.” (p. 7).

3. Insecurity

According to Wilcox (1969), “Insecurity is a sense or feeling of insecurity caused by specific economic reasons, such as because of the income of the family may be cut abruptly, reducing its ability to pay for shelter, food, and other needed goods. They are even more insecure if their expenses are increasing at the same time.” (p. 40).

In this thesis, the writer is going to use all of the three terms as follows; poverty, which means there is a lack of something or when the quality of something is extremely low. The word “something” represents any aspect of life, although it mostly discusses about economic condition, but it is also can refer to social, political, and educational situations. As the setting of the novel is Post-French Revolution and it was in the 18th century, the revolution brought a big change to social conditions in France at that time. Since there were two expensive wars that needed to be supported financially, and years of failed harvests, the common people were motivated the people for a change. Meanwhile, the rich elite sought to increase their wealth by imposing heavy taxes on a poverty stricken
population that was virtually all under or unemployed and bankrupt. As a result of the continued marginalization of the poor people, social upheaval was inevitable, inviting widespread crime and amoral behavior while corruption and disease ran rampant through all classes of the French society.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explains the literature review that aids the writer’s analysis. The writer divided this chapter into two parts. The first part is the review of related theories and the second part is the theoretical review. The review of related theories discusses the theories and approaches employed in the study. This second part consists of a review of the critical theory approach, and the theory of poverty. The second part also discusses this thesis’ theoretical framework and explains the contribution of the theories and reviews in answering the problem questions in the study.

2.1 Review of Related Theories

The theories used in this study are taken from the fields of literature, and socio-cultural history. The writer employs these theories considering this study is about novel character’s personality. The thesis questions concern the events that happened at the time of the setting and its effects on the character’s personality.

In the scope of literature, the writer employs specific approaches, namely aspects of the critical theory. While the writer uses the economic condition to analyze the poverty in France in the early 1800’s as depicted in Fantine.
2.1.1 Theories of Literature

The theories of literature used in this study are taken from *Using Critical Theory* written by Lois Tyson (2011). In this text, there are several theories that are in the book. In this thesis the writer will use only a few critical theories. The followings are basic explanations for each theory.

2.1.1.1 Theories of Critical Theory

For some people literature might seem a little difficult to understand and especially to analyze. For example, the poem *The Raven* written by Edgar Allan Poe (1845) might be difficult to understand or to analyze because the writer has his own very unique style of writing and it can be a bit tricky sometimes for the readers to follow his cryptic meanings. In order to better understand and to analyze this literature work, some theories are provided to make it more understandable.

Tyson (2011) explains the Critical theory that consists of several critical theories. The most interesting aspect is that, each theory focuses our attention on a different aspect of literature and gives us its own set of concepts to understand the world in which we live and the literature that is a part and parcel of our world (p. 3). There are eight theories in the Critical theory; they are reader-response theory, new critical theory, psychoanalytic theory, Marxist theory, feminist theory, lesbian, gay, and queer theories, African American theory, and the postcolonial theory.
1. Reader-response Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it focuses on how readers make meaning of what happens to us as we read a particular literary work. Reader-response approach, try to determine how our response to literary works are influenced by our personal experiences, by the emotional or psychological dimension of our daily lives. For example: our likes and dislikes, our loves, our fears, our desires, and our memories (p. 13).

2. New Critical Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it focuses exclusively on the ways in which language operates in a literary text to make meaning. New critics called the use of authorial intention to determine the meaning of a literary work the intentional fallacy, or the false belief in an author’s intended meaning. In short, neither the study of authorial intention nor provision of a talented reader’s impressions focuses on the literary work, or the text itself, as new critics called it (p. 39).

3. Psychoanalytic Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it asks us to examine the emotional causes of the characters’ behavior and to view a given story, poem, or play as the unfolding of the characters’ personal psychological dramas. For these and other psychoanalytic concepts have some more and more into common use over the last several decades. Common use however, usually includes some degree of misconception and is too incomplete to give us the full benefit of psychoanalytic theory (p. 82)
4. Marxist Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it asks us to look at the ways in which characters’ behavior and plot events are influenced by the socioeconomic conditions of the time and place in which the characters live. For Marxist theory however, the socioeconomic system in which we live does much more than determine who has the most power. It also determines among other things, how we are educated, and it influences our religious beliefs, which together controlling to a great degree how we perceive ourselves and our world (p. 110).

5. Feminist Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it asks us to look at the ways in which traditional gender roles, which cast men as naturally dominant and women as naturally submissive, affect characters’ behavior and plot events. Feminist theory asks us to examine, instead, the ways in which our personal identity is formed by our culture’s definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman. For from feminist perspective, our experience of both the family and the socioeconomic system in which we live depends to a large extent on our sex (p. 139).

6. Lesbian, Gay, and Queer Theories

Tyson (2011) states that it asks us to examine the ways in which literary works reveal human sexuality as a complex phenomenon that cannot be fully understood in terms of what is currently defined as heterosexual experience. Lesbian theorists have raised important questions about what it means to define
oneself as a lesbian. Gay theorists have reminded us that definitions of heterosexuality and homosexuality can differ from culture to culture (p. 173).

7. African American Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it focuses our attention on the many different ways in which race and racial issues operate in literary text. As recently as the 1950s, the only work readily available to people of color in the United States was menial labor. African Americans were hired as farms hands in rural areas, and in the cities they worked as maids, custodians, waiters, cooks, baggage handlers, and in other “service” occupations (p. 208).

8. Postcolonial Theory

Tyson (2011) states that it asks us to look at the ways in which literature offers us a view of human experience as the product of a combination of cultural factors, including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and cultural beliefs and customs. Postcolonial theory developed the concepts we will study furthermore because, as its name implies, this theory emerged in an attempt to understand people from different cultures in terms of an important experience they all had in common (p. 245).

Each theory in the Critical theory has its own strength and weakness. The writer cannot use all the theories in the Critical theory to analyze the character’s personality and the socio-economic influences on the character’s personality. For
this reason from the theories provided, the writer employs only two of the theories: the Marxist Theory and the Postcolonial Theory.

2.1.2 Poverty Effects towards Child’s Behavior

Based on certain theorists, there are specific theories about what affects someone’s personality. Hurlock (1976) who states that there are eight factors which influence someone’s personality (p. 137-354). In this study, the writer only employs two determinants, which are social determinants and family determinants. Those two determinants are related to the events that happened in the novel. The social and family conditions in the novel are poor. It is because in social conditions, the people’s point of view toward Fantine who already had a daughter but her husband left her makes people think that she is a prostitute. In family conditions, Cosette, the young daughter who only had a mother and an absent father that abandoned them makes Fantine struggle to earn a living. The challenge happens because extreme poverty has come to the people in that era and that is why people must struggle to earn a living and do whatever they can to get food or money. Those conditions affected little Cosette who has to work in a motel where she and her mother live because they cannot afford to have a house to live.

2.1.3 Theory of Poverty

The theory of poverty is taken from a journal written by Islam (2005). Islam (2005) states that poverty is divided into four types, that is: social darwinian

2.1.3 Social Darwinian Theory of Poverty

Islam (2005) states that the poor were poor because they did not work hard. They squandered money on gambling, drinking and unnecessary luxuries, and they had disorder of family life. They had no ambition, no inner call for work, were fatalistic, and suffered from “an intractable ineducability.” According to Social Darwinists, the poor are poor because they have low IQ and low mental capacity and biologically destined to be poor. The welfare system that underwrites this human substratum of deviance is a sheer wastage of resources and should be dismantled (p. 2).

2.1.3.2 Culture of Poverty

The second theory is the theory of the culture of poverty developed by the anthropologist, Lewis (1959). The culture of poverty is a specific syndrome that develops in specific situations. According to Islam (2005), it requires an economic setting of cash economy, a high rate of unemployment and under employment, low wages and people with low skills. In the absence of voluntary or state support and stable family, the low-income population tends to develop the culture of poverty against the dominant ideology of accumulation of the middle class. The poor realize that they have a marginal position within a highly stratified and individualistic capitalistic society, which does not offer them any prospect for upward mobility. In order to survive, the poor have to develop their own
institutions and agencies because the larger society tends to ignore and bypass them. Lewis found 70 traits that underlie this subculture. He classified these traits into four types (p. 2).

1. Relationships between the subculture and the larger society

Islam (2005) states that people either disengage or maintain distance from the larger society. They do not belong to labor unions or political parties, go to banks or hospitals or enjoy leisure facilities of the city. They have a high mistrust of the dominant institutions of society (p. 3).

2. Nature of the slum community

Islam (2005) states that the slum community is characterized by poor housing and overcrowding and a minimum of organizational structure beyond the space of family. Certain ‘charitable’ institutions grow up mainly to meet their minimum needs. The slum economy is inward looking. It is embedded in pawning of personal goods, informal credit and use of second hand goods (p. 3).

3. Nature of the family

Islam (2005) states that nature of the family is characterized by overt signs including: a bilateral kinship system, unstable marriages, and generally matrifocal family hierarchy (p.3).
4. Attitudes, values and personality of the individual

Islam (2005) states that The individual has ‘a strong feeling of fatalism, helplessness, dependence and inferiority creating a weak ego tuned to the gratification in the present and a strong preoccupation with masculinity (p. 3).

2.1.3.3 Situational Theory of Poverty

Islam (2005) notes that the situational theory of poverty holds that the poor people behave differently because they do not have the resources and opportunities to adopt the middle class life styles. Young people have few opportunities to go to college and so they drop out. Women prefer the matrifocal family because it allows them to have greater claim upon their children.

The situational theory gives importance to the structural conditions that give rise to poverty, but it also tends to focus upon the individual responses to the objective situation of poverty. It differs from the culture of poverty theory in a fundamental sense. It does not assume the pre-existence of a subculture that gives coherence and solidity to the behavior of the poor. The situational theory holds that individuals rationally follow a pattern of behavior, which is suitable for the objective situation of their life. It has been argued from this perspective that the poor do not follow middle class values because they know that they cannot achieve it. As a result in practice, they tolerate large deviations from middle class aspirations. This has been described as the lower class ‘value stretch’ (p. 3).
2.1.3.4 Structural Theory of Poverty

Structural theories of poverty hold that poverty is caused by the structure of the larger socioeconomic order. According to Islam (2005), it is the macrostructure of society that produces inequality and consequently poverty. The structure of global capitalism, for example, gives rise to inequality and large-scale poverty all over the world.

Marxism of different varieties has remained a major theoretical perspective for understanding poverty. Dependency theory, which emerged in Latin America, has been particularly concerned with Third World poverty. The Theory of marginalization of Latin American vintage has a rich tradition of exploring the fate of human deprivation and marginality. Another key phrase that has become immensely popular in recent years is social exclusion (p. 4).

2.1.4 The French Revolution

As the setting of the novel, the French Revolution brings significant effect to the character’s personality. Extreme Poverty appeared in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The people had to struggle to earn a living, and do whatever they could to survive. Even children have to work and sacrifice their childhood so they could survive. According to Hutchinson (1993), a way of speaking is sought that allows people to identify the suffering of the poor without having to identify with the poor. As such, it is obviously the voice of the non-poor that speaks from the vantage point of its own privilege. The poor are denied access to both material and intellectual resources. Shunned and silenced, they suffer the double indignity
of being consigned to existential penury and intellectual purgatory. Deprived of a language through which to speak, their experience is diminished and distanced from the reality that the rhetoric of poverty claims to represent (p. 206).

2.1.4.1 Economic Condition

The economic condition in that era is very bad. People have to suffer from hunger and work even harder to earn a meager living. That is why in that era some people have to steal food or money to survive because they do not have jobs or they cannot do anything to work in a factory. Besides, there were two expensive wars which required support. That is why there was also high taxation which people needed to pay. Perez (1991) stated that John Holker, a general inspector of commerce and manufactures, visited Saint-Itienne and was astonished by the routine in the production of metalware: "People always work by hand, without searching for inventions which could substitute for them." In Holker's view, this simplicity was because the French suffered from poverty, overtaxation, and burdensome internal and external customs duties (p. 912).

Michelet (1958) states that who would believe that, in the bosom of peace, this aimable prince, in only seven years, finds means to add to the two billions and a half of debts left by Louis XIV, seven hundred and fifty millions (of francs) more? The whole paid up in paper (p. 2-3). It is a fact that in the eighteenth century in France there was a huge debt and the people are suffering in that debt. Michelet (1958) adds, the time when France, exhausted by Louis XIV, and bleeding at every pore, sought a remedy in a bankruptcy of three billions (p. 3). It
was very devastating for the people in France at that time. They had to suffer in that debt, moreover they had to experience bad harvests. Michelet (1958) states that not only does the land produce less, but it is less cultivated. In many places, it is not worth while to cultivate it. Large proprietors tired of advancing to their peasants sums that never return, neglect the land which would require expensive improvements. The portion cultivated grows less, and the deserts expands (p. 3).

The statement above stated that the people were experiencing bad harvests and they were devastated about the condition they were experiencing. Michelet (1958) adds, how can we be surprised that the crops should fail with such half-starved husband-men, or that the land should suffer and refuse to yield? The yearly produce no longer suffices for the year. Nature yields less and less. Like a beastover fatigued, unwilling to move one step further, and preferring to lie down and die, she waits, and produces no more (p. 3–4).

The people in that era were also suffering from hunger considering they were experiencing bad harvests. Taine (1875) states that the inhabitants live only on buckwheat, and for five years, the apple crop having failed, they drink only water. There, in a country of vineyards, the vine-dressers each year are reduced, for the most part, to begging their bread during the dull season. Elsewhere, several of the day-laborers and mechanics obliged to sell their effects and household goods, die of the cold; insufficient and unhealthy food generates sickness, while in two districts, thirty-five thousand persons are stated to be living on alms. In a remote canton the peasants cut the grain still green and dry it in the oven, because they are too hungry to wait (p. 16). The people in that era were suffering from
hunger and they were poor. The theory above really show that in the eighteenth century people were really poor and they did not have money even to buy food. Taine (1875) adds that poor widows have burned up their wooden bedsteads and others have consumed their fruit trees to preserve themselves from the cold. Many poor creatures eat oat bread, and others bread of soaked bran, this nourishment causing many deaths among infants. People evidently live from day to day; whenever the crop proves poor they lack bread (p. 16-17).

People’s economic condition was also devastated. They had to work harder and harder for the minimum wage. Taine (1875) states that wheat bread costs, as at the present day, three sous per pound, but as the average day’s work brought only nineteen sous instead of forty, the day-laborer, working the same time, could buy only the half of a loaf instead of a full loaf (p. 19). Not only for the laborer, even a woman with children got the influence from this situation. Taine (1875) states that a woman, with two children in swaddling clothes, having no milk, and without an inch of ground (p. 21). The condition and the theory shown above really showed that people in that era were suffering from hunger and they had to work harder and harder to fulfil their daily needs although they had to work for the minimum wage.

The writer is going to use the theory and the conditions above to analyze the poverty condition in France in the early 1800’s as depicted in Fantine in Victor Hugo’s Les Miserables novel.
2.1.4.2 Education

The French Revolution, with its growth, maritime concentration, and the increase in population created other problems. Health and education become serious problems. The town meant some dirt, low standard of living, and forced children to go to work and not go to school or get any courses. Since there were long hours of working in the factories, people really could not afford to go to school. The small amount of time they had after working, they used for time for themselves, for amusement, recreation, and rest.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The reviews of related theories are applied to help the writer to answer the questions provided in the problem formulation. To answer the first question, the writer uses the theory of Critical Theory and the theory of poverty to examine the poverty experienced by Fantine as presented by Victor Hugo’s novel *Les Miserables*. To support the analysis of poverty experienced by Fantine, the writer also reviews the setting of the story, in this case in France during the era of French Revolution (1780s) and the era of post-French Revolution in the early of 1800’s and the social background of Fantine.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter focused on the discussion of the object of the study, the choices of approaches in analyzing the story, as well as the explanation about procedures taken in the study.

3.1 Object of the Study

This study saw a literary work as its object. In this study, the writer would like to analyze the novel written by Victor Hugo, and the title is *Les Miserables*. This novel was first published in 1862, and told about life of some different characters in France. This novel has 1232 pages and five parts. This novel was already transcribed into script Play then into semi-opera movie starring Hugh Jackman, Anne Hathaway, Amanda Seyfried, Russel Crowe, and Helena Bonham Carter. The movie praised and won some categories in Academy Awards and Golden Globe.

This novel told about some different characters and they had their own struggle in their life. Jean Valjean, the criminal who was trying to escape his reputation; Javert, the police agent who was trailing him; the unfortunate Fantine and her daughter Cosette who had to struggle for their lives so they could survive; the rascally Thenardier; and above all the splendid street urchin, Gavroche. In this study, the writer was focusing on the poverty effect toward Fantine and how she struggled for her life.
3.2 Approaches

In analyzing this novel, the writer employed the culture of poverty theory and from critical theory; the writer employed Marxist Theory and Postcolonial Theory. The writer found that Fantine was affected by socioeconomic condition at that time. People were poor because of the effect of French Revolution.

The purpose of using Marxist Theory was to find out the ways in which characters’ behavior and plot events were influenced by the socioeconomic conditions of the time and place in which the characters live. The writer would discuss how the socioeconomic condition affected Fantine’s life and how she struggled for her life and her daughter’s.

3.3 Sources

This study used library research to gather the sources. The writer used two kinds of sources, namely the primary source and secondary source. The primary source was taken from the novel itself: Les Miserables written by Victor Hugo, a French author. This novel was used as the main source and the evidence for the thesis analysis.

The secondary source was taken from history books which told about the social – economic condition in that era and some theories which the writer took from some books and journals, The Economic Origins of The French Revolution, Poverty or Prosperity? written by Jules Michelet (1958), Poverty, Economics, and Society by Helen Ginsburg (1972), and Toward Social Welfare written by Clair
Wilcox (1969). These books gave some clues and the relation between the social cultural – historical and the novel.

3.4 Procedure

There were some steps that could be used to describe the effect of poverty toward the character’s personality. As the first step, the writer read the novel and then tried to understand the content and concentrated on the main character’s reaction and action, so the writer understood the character’s personality better. Then the writer quoted some important points of the related events and linked it to the analysis and then showed the description of the main character.

As the second step, the writer gathered some books which contained relevant socio-cultural historical background of the novel. The writer focused on the French Revolution era, and the writer elucidated into its social and economic condition.

As the third step, the writer tried to find out the possibilities of critical theory that can be applied in analyzing whether the poverty in France in the early 1800’s really depicted in Fantine. Then the writer chose the socio-historical – cultural theory and related it to the novel. To analyze the socio – economic condition in the French Revolution era, the writer employed the description of French during the French Revolution from the beginning to the end by Jules Michelet (1958).

The last step, the writer analyzed the novel to prove whether this book was written as Hugo’s description when French was in the French Revolution and
poverty was the impact of it. To find out the answers to the formulated problems, the writer had to relate the characters, the setting of place and events in the novel socio-cultural historical facts.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS

This chapter discusses the description and experience of how Fantine struggles to survive through the poverty as seen in Fantine in the novel. The description of how she struggles to survive through the poverty can simply be described as extremely poor, despicably abject, and completely miserable.

4. The Poverty in France in the Early 1800’s as Depicted in Fantine

After being left by her husband, Tholomyes, Fantine has to work harder to fulfill her daily needs as she also has a little daughter to provide for. After being dismissed from the factory, she has to find another job to get the income. The income is actually cannot cover her life and her daughter’s but she does not have any other choice.

An anthropologist, Lewis (1959) develops the theory of the culture of poverty. The culture of poverty is a specific syndrome that grows up in some situations. According to Islam (2005), it requires an economic setting of cash economy, a high rate of unemployment and under employment, low wages and people with low skills. In the absence of voluntary or state support and stable family, the low-income population tends to develop the culture of poverty against the dominant ideology of accumulation of the middle class. The poor realize that they have a marginal position within a highly stratified and individualistic capitalistic society that does not offer them any prospect for upward mobility. In
order to survive, the poor have to develop their own institutions and agencies because the larger society tends to ignore and bypass them. Thus the poor come to embody a common set of values, norms and pattern which is different from the general culture as such. In short the poor has a way of life – a specific subculture (p. 2).

Based on the facts above, Fantine has to build her own opportunity. Since she does not have any skills, she has to work hard in the Monsieur Madeline’s factory to fulfill her and her little daughter’s daily needs. After being dismissed from the factory she tries another job.

She did piecework stitching of shirts for the soldiers of the garrison, which brought her in twelve sous a day. He child cost ten sous. This was when she began to fall behind in her payments to the Thenardiers (p. 174; bk. 5, ch. 9).

Fantine tried to find work as a servant, but no one would take her. She could not leave the town. The second-hand dealer who had supplied her furniture-and such furniture! Said to her, “If you do I’ll have you arrested as a thief.” Her landlord, to whom she owed rent, said “You’re young and pretty, you can pay.” She divided the fifty francs between them, returned three-quarters of the furniture, keeping only the bare essentials, and found herself without work or status, possessing nothing but a bed and still owing about a hundred francs (p. 174; bk. 5, ch. 9).

In addition she must suffer after the people know she has a daughter without a husband and then she is dismissed from her work because of the people’s perspective about a woman who has a child without a husband.
4.1 Extremely Poor

After being left by the love of her life, and having a child, she gives up everything. She feels that her life is upside down and she does not know where to go.

The mother, who seemed poor and unhappy, had the look of a town worker reverting to her peasant state. She was young and perhaps pretty but the clothes she was wearing did not allow this to appear. A single lock of her seemingly abundant fair hair had escaped from beneath the tight, plain cap that she wore tied under her chin. A smile might have shown that she had fine teeth, but she did not smile; she looked indeed as though it were a long time since she had been dry-eyed. She was pale and evidently tired, and her gaze, as she glanced at her sleeping child, was one of intense solicitude. A large blue kerchief, like an invalid shawl, draped the upper part of her body, with beneath it a calico dress and thick shoes and over all a cloak of coarse wool. Her hands were rough and freckled, and one fore finger was pricked and calloused. It was Fantine. (p. 145-146; bk. 4, ch. 1).

Before she gets a job, she sells all of her belongings to pay some debts, and to cover her and her daughter’s daily needs. Taine (1875) stated that the inhabitants live only on buckwheat, and for five years, the apple crop have failed, they drink only water. There, in a country of vineyards, the vine-dressers each year are reduced, for the most part, to begging their bread during the dull season. Elsewhere, several of the day-laborers and mechanics obliged to sell their effects and household goods, die of the cold; insufficient and unhealthy food generates sickness, while in two districts, thirty-five thousand persons are stated to be living on alms (p. 16).
She sold all her possessions, which produced two hundred francs, but only eighty remained after her debts were paid. And on a fine spring morning she left Paris, a girl of twenty-two with her baby on her back. Those who saw them pass may well have pitied them. (p. 147; bk. 4, ch. 1).

When she is about to drop her little daughter to the Thenardiers because she has to go to another town to work and she cannot look after her daughter at the moment, she pays some amount of money to the Thenardier so they can look after her daughter. A family sometimes are too big to fulfil their daily needs, Taine (1875) stated that a woman, with two children in swaddling clothes, having no milk, and without an inch of ground (p. 21).

“You shall have them,” said Cosette’s mother. “I’ve got eighty francs. I shall still have enough to get me to my own country if I go on foot, and I’ll find work and when I’ve saved a little money I’ll come for her.” (p. 149; bk. 4, ch. 1).

Taine (1875) stated that Rousseau’s peasant, concealing his wine and bread in a pit, assuredly had a yet more secret hiding-place; a little money in a woolen stocking or in a jug escapes, more readily than elsewhere, the search of the clerks. Dressed in rags, going barefoot, eating nothing but coarse black bread (p. 22).

### 4.2 Despicably Abject

Fantine has no regular job. So in order to live, she has to give up everything to survive and even she has to sell her beautiful hair. The debts grow
from her creditor and the Thenardiers who begin asking for more money and unfortunately she cannot earn more money, so she sells her hair to earn the money.

She could not earn enough money and her debts grew. The Thenardiers bombarded her with letters, heartrending in tone and ominous in their exactions. They wrote to say that Cosette was obliged to go almost naked in the cold and that at least ten francs were needed to buy her a woolen dress. Receiving this letter, Fantine carried it crumpled in her hand throughout the day, and in the evening went to the barber at the corner of the street and withdrew her comb, letting her hair fall down to her waist. “Such beautiful hair!” said the barber. “What will you give me for it?” she asked. “Ten francs.” “Then cut it off.” She bought a woolen dress and sent it to the Thenardiers, who were furious. The money was what they wanted. They gave the dress to their daughter Eponine, and the little lark, Cosette went on shivering (p. 176; bk. 5, ch. 10).

She really eventually had nothing of value. Her life was deep down in misery. She possesses nothing but her life. She also sells her two top front teeth for two napoleons to give it to the Thenardiers because they tell her that Cosette will die because of a deadly illness which was a ruse to extract more payment. Taine (1875) stated that poor widows have burned up their wooden bedsteads and others have consumed their fruit trees to preserve themselves from the cold. Many poor creatures eat oat bread, and others bread of soaked bran, this nourishment
causes many deaths among infants. People evidently live from day to day; whenever the crop proves poor they lack bread (p. 16-17).

She smiled as she said it, and the candle lighted her face. It was a bloodstained smile. There were flecks of blood at the corners of her mouth and a wide gap beneath her upper lip. She sent the forty francs to Montfermeil. Needless to say, the Thenardiers were lying. Cosette was not ill. Fantine threw away her mirror. She had long since exchanged her small room on the second floor for an attic under the sloping roof, against the beams of which she constantly bumped her head. Paupers cannot reach the end of their abode, or of their destiny, except by crouching ever lower. She no longer possessed a bed but only a mattress on the floor, a tattered blanket and a rickety chair. A potted rose in one of the corner of the room had died of neglect (p. 178-179; bk. 5, ch. 10).

Being unable to find work, feeling lost and facing the Thenardiers who were demanding for more money, made Fantine to become a prostitute. Her life becomes more miserable. She has no choice except becoming a prostitute.

A hundred francs! In what calling was it possible to earn a hundred sous a day? There was only one. “Well,” thought Fantine, “I may as well sell the rest.” She became a prostitute (p. 179; bk. 5, ch. 10).

Taine (1875) stated that the peasant is too poor to undertake cultivation on his own account, possessing no agricultural capital. The proprietor, desirous of improving his land, finds no one to cultivate it but miserable creatures possessing a pair of hands. The peasants cannot really find any jobs at that moment, so some of the women become prostitute to get some money to survive (p. 19).
4.3 Completely Miserable

She has left her town, Montreuil-sur-mer, ten years ago. Now she is back again and she can see the big difference between the town and herself. The town has grown prosperously but she is the contrary of her town.

It was ten years since she had left the district, and in that time things had greatly changed. While she had been sinking into the depths of poverty, her native town had grown prosperous. During the past two years there had occurred one of those industrial developments which are major events in the life of a small community (p. 155; bk. 5, ch. 1).

She tries to find some works to fulfill her daily needs in the town, and she is grateful because she finds one in the Monsieur Madeline’s factory in the women’s workshop. The wage is not so big but her financial problems are solved. Taine (1875) stated that wheat bread costs, as at the present day, three sous per pound, but as the average day’s work brought only nineteen sous instead of forty, the day-laborer, working the same time, could buy only the half of a loaf instead of a full loaf (p. 19). Some of the people have to work harder for the minimum wage.

Such was the state of affairs when Fantine returned to the town. No one remembered her, but fortunately the doors of Madeline’s factory were open. She found employment in the women’s workshop. The work was new to her and she was not very good at it. Nor was the pay large but it sufficed to solve her problem; it brought her a living (p. 171; bk. 5, ch. 7).
Her so–called friends in the factory find out that Fantine has a child. They know when she secretly sends at least two letters a month, always to the same address, paying the postage in advance. The name of her correspondent was also discovered – Monsieur Thenardier, inn-keeper at Montfermeil. They try to get her dismissed by telling the truth to the factory’s supervisor. (p 172; bk. 5, ch. 8)

Fantine’s case was hopeless. She could not leave the district because she owed money for her rent and furniture, a sum of about one hundred and fifty francs. She went begged the workshop supervisor for money, who gave it to her but forthwith dismissed her; she had, in any case been an indifferent worker. Overwhelmed by shame even more than by despair, she left the factory and took refuge in her room. Her fault was now known to everyone. She lacked the courage to plead her cause and did not venture to approach the mayor although she was advised to do so. The mayor, by the way of the supervisor, had given her fifty francs because she was kind, and had sent her away because he was just. She accepted the verdict (p. 173; bk. 5, ch. 8).

After being dismissed from the factory, she tries to find another job to pay the debts and the money she owes to the Thenardiers. Her life is getting worse and worse. Taine (1875) stated that the inhabitants live only on buckwheat, and for five years, the apple crop having failed, they drink only water. There, in a country of vineyards, the vine-dressers each year are reduced, for the most part, to begging their bread during the dull season. Elsewhere, several of the day-laborers and mechanics obliged to sell their effects and household goods, die of the cold; insufficient and unhealthy food generates sickness, while in two districts, thirty-
five thousand persons are stated to be living on alms. In a remote canton the
peasants cut the grain still green and dry it in the oven, because they are too
hungry to wait (p. 16).

Fantine tried to find work as a servant, but no one would take her. She
could not leave the town. The second-hand dealer who had supplied her
furniture – and such furniture! Said to her, “If you do I’ll have you
arrested as a thief.” Her landlord, to whom she owed rent, said “You’re
young and pretty, you can pay.” She divided the fifty francs between them,
returned three-quarters of the furniture, keeping only the bare essentials,
and found herself without work or status, possessing nothing but a bed and
still owing about a hundred francs. She did piecework stitching of shirts
for the soldiers of the garrison, which brought her in twelve sous a day.
Her child cost ten sous. This was when she began to fall behind in her
payments to the Thenardiers (p. 174; bk. 5, ch. 9).

After all the misery she has experienced, the Thenardiers begin to force
her to pay more and more money even the amount was not reasonable for her to
get, and she almost goes mad because of that. Taine (1875) states that wheat bread
costs, as at the present day, three sous per pound, but as the average day’s work
brought only nineteen sous instead of forty, the day-laborer, working the same
time, could buy only the half of a loaf instead of a full loaf (p. 19).

“A silly joke in a letter I’ve just had from some country people. They want
forty francs from me, the poor ignorant peasants!” (p. 177; bk. 5, ch. 10).

After her life becomes more miserable by becoming a prostitute, she has to
accept mistreatment by a man called Monsieur Barmatabois. After she becomes a
prostitute, she keeps accepting mistreatment.
The woman, a sad and garish ghost coming and going through the snow, paid no attention to him, but with the sombre resignation of a soldier condemned to a flogging, continued her silent patrol, which every few minutes brought her within range of his sarcasms. Finding that he was producing no effect, the gentleman got to his feet, crept up behind her, scooped up a handful of snow and thrust it down her back between between her bare shoulders. The woman uttered a cry and, turning, sprang at him like a tigress, ripping his face with her finger-nails and screaming at him in language that might have shocked an army sergeant. The stream of obscenities, uttered in a voice coarsened by cheap brandy, poured hideously out of a gap-toothed mouth. The woman was Fantine (p. 182; bk. 5, ch. 12).

Misery had already become her friend. She also was mistreated by everyone and now she becomes sick, almost dying but she is grateful because Monsieur Madeline takes care of her.

She had passed a very restless night, coughing incessantly with a high fever; and she had bad dreams. When the doctor called in the morning she was delirious. He had seemed much perturbed and had recommended that Monsieur Madeleine should be informed directly when he returned (p. 233; bk. 7, ch. 6).

She is sick now and because of her sickness, she has to rest most of the time on the bed. Her face shows how miserable and also very sick she is. It is like her illness causes her to age dramatically.

When, a few months previously, Fantine had put aside the last shreds of her modesty, her shame, and her happiness, she had the shadow of her former self; but now she was its ghost. Physical deterioration had
completed the work of spiritual sickness. The woman of twenty-five had a wrinkled forehead and flaccid cheeks, pinched nostrils and loosened teeth, a sallow face, a bony neck and wasted limbs, and there were grey threads mingled with her fair hair. Disease is a great simulator of age. (p. 234; bk. 7, ch. 6)

After all the misery she has to accept, she dies finally unhappily during the fight between Javert and Jean Valjean. Suddenly, she falls over and then dies.

Fantine sat upright, supporting herself on her rigid arms. Her eyes travelled from Valjean to Javert and then to the nun. She seemed about to speak, but only a whimper issued from her lips, while her teeth chattered. She reached out her arms in a gesture of anguish and with open hands groped like person in the act of drowning. And suddenly she fell back against the pillow. Her head struck the head of the bed and then sank limply against her shoulder, the mouth open, the eyes wide and sightless. She was dead (p. 269-270; bk. 8, ch. 4).

After she dies, Monsieur Madeleine buries her and limits the funeral to the barest essentials. This is the pitiful death of the poor Fantine.

After all, what were the persons directly concerned? – a criminal and a woman of the town. So he limited the funeral to the barest essentials, consigning Fantine to a pauper’s grave in the free corner of the cemetery. Mercifully, God knows where to look for our souls. Her mortal remains were laid to rest, in company with other unconsidered bones, in a public grave resembling her own bed (p. 275; bk. 8, ch. 5)

That is the end of Fantine. The virtuous Fantine who is beautiful but in many ways the world is cruel to her. She is suffering in poverty for her whole life. And she dies in deep misery.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND SUGGESTIONS

This final chapter provides the readers with a conclusion of the whole analysis of the formulated problem, the suggestions for further researchers, and the implementation of teaching learning activities based on the analysis of the Romantic novel, *Les Miserables*.

5.1 Conclusion

In this part, the writer will give the conclusion of the study. There is one conclusion dealing with the problem formulations. It is about how the poverty of the post-French Revolution era in the early 1800’s in France is described through Fantine.

Poverty makes her miserable. From the beginning, she cannot write and scarcely read so she has no skill. The father of her child left her so she must live by her own and struggled for her child. But poverty makes her miserable. Her life becomes worse and worse.

The first conclusion deals with the description of poverty through Fantine. Affected by the poverty, her life is extremely poor. She is despicably abject, and becomes completely miserable. Her life becomes extremely poor because she has to work harder and her wage is not enough to cover the debts and her daily needs, so she decides to sell her belongings like furnitures. She even has to sell her hair and two front teeth when she is dismissed from the factory and cannot find job.
She is despicably abject because she has a child to take care of. She does not know where else to work, after being dismissed and she must sell her hair and two front teeth to cover the debts and in order to get some money. When she does not know where else to work she becomes a prostitute. She becomes even completely miserable. She has nothing left and she has given up everything she has. She has no beauty left on her, she has no work, and to cover the debts from the Thenardiers and her daily needs she becomes a low-life prostitute. After all that she has been through, she gets sick and her sickness gets worse and worse and finally she dies in deep misery.

5.2 Implication

Literature has several kinds of examples such as poem, novel, song and play performance. Novel is one of the literary works that is good in teaching language to students. There are a lot of language features and moral values, which every student can learn from the novels. Reading and analyzing novel can be new strategies for the students’ activity in the classroom considering that the students are sometimes bored with the usual books used in the class. With this kind of activity, the teacher should guide the students to choose certain kinds of story that contains moral value in it.

A novel can improve students’ vocabulary because the novel contains many kinds of words and phrases. Besides, a novel also provides us with some kinds of material that we can learn from. For example in the novel Les Miserables, there are stories that are not only about romance and sad things. It is
also about historical knowledge since Victor Hugo, the author of the book, wrote the novel in 1862 and the setting of the story is to the early eighteenth to nineteenth century when France was in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The students can also learn about historical knowledge even though the story is not real but the students can learn how Victor Hugo described the characters in the novel and their struggle with the poverty that was prevalent at that time.

5.3 Suggestions

This part consists of the suggestion for the future implementation in teaching reading in class and future implementation for the researchers using Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables* novel as a source material.

5.3.1 Suggestion for further Researchers

From the novel *Les Miserables*, there are some interesting topics that can be analyzed further. I focused on the effect of poverty on the character, Fantine.

*Les Miserables* is a very interesting novel written by Victor Hugo. Every one of the characters are explained in great detail and he really describes the characters in a very sad way. For example Fantine is the character that I analyzed. She is virtuous and innocent but in her life she is suffering in poverty, with debts to pay, while letters bombarded by the Thenardiers forcing her to send some amount of money for her child. We can describe many actions or ideas from this description. I only focused on the effect of poverty on one of the characters in the novel. I suggest anyone who intends to analyze *Les Miserables* make further
analysis about the minor and the major character more specifically. And maybe the researchers can try to discover the character’s development that happened on Jean Valjean, another figure in the novel. He used to be bad but in the end of the novel he becomes good. Another suggestion is to make further study from different points of view about human relationship, or using other theories from the psychological field.

5.3.2 Suggestion for the Implementation in Teaching and Learning Process

*Les Miserables* as a well-known work of literature can be the main source in teaching learning activities. By using literature, student’s vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar mastery can be improved as well as the four language skills; listening, reading, writing, and speaking. I suggest applying *Les Miserables* in teaching reading for ELESP students.

The whole story of *Les Miserables* is mostly about poverty, struggle, and the miserable life of the Post French Revolution era. Victor Hugo describes the entire story and the characters in a very sad way. The story focuses on how the common people struggle in their suffering especially Fantine. Fantine is actually not the main character and while she is the supporting character in the novel, she struggles much more than the others in how she suffers in poverty and in the end she dies in deep misery. Here I suggest *Les Miserables* to be used as a teaching material in reading class. Because I believe students are learning the story through reading class this approach can improve students’ vocabulary. Since it is a literature study, the students can learn how the author describes all the characters
in the story and how the author develops the main ideas. The students can also discuss the plot, character, and moral value of the book. Besides these benefits, it could improve the knowledge of history while improving the students’ vocabularies. Finally, students can enjoy a famous literary work from one of most renowned French writers in the Romantic movement, Victor Hugo (1802 - 1885).
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF LES MISERABLES

Jean Valjean, after spending nineteen years in jail and in the galleys for stealing a loaf of bread and for several attempts to escape, is finally released, but his past keeps haunting him. At Digne, he is repeatedly refused shelter for the night. Only the saintly bishop, Monseigneur Myriel, welcomes him. Valjean repays his host's hospitality by stealing his silverware. When the police bring him back, the bishop protects his errant guest by pretending that the silverware is a gift. With a pious lie, he convinces them that the convict has promised to reform. After one more theft, Jean Valjean does indeed repent. Under the name of M. Madeleine he starts a factory and brings prosperity to the town of Montreuil.

Next, Hugo introduces the pathetic young girl Fantine. Alone and burdened with an illegitimate child, she is on the way back to her hometown of Montreuil, to find a job. On the road, she entrusts her daughter to an innkeeper and his wife, the Thénardiers.

In Montreuil, Fantine finds a job in Madeleine's factory and attains a modicum of prosperity. Unfortunately she is fired and, at the same time, must meet increasing financial demands by the Thénardiers. Defeated by her difficulties, Fantine turns to prostitution. Tormented by a local idler, she causes a disturbance and is arrested by Inspector Javert. Only Madeleine's forceful intervention keeps her out of jail. She catches a fever, however, and her health...
deteriorates dangerously. Death is imminent and M. Madeleine promises to bring her daughter, Cosette to her.

Madeleine, however, is faced with serious problems. A man has been arrested as Jean Valjean and is about to be condemned for his crimes. After a night of agonizing moral conflict, Madeleine decides to confess his past. At Arras, the seat of the trial, he dramatically exonerates the accused. A few days later, he is arrested by Javert at Fantine's bedside. The shocking scene kills the young woman.

That same night Valjean escapes, but he is quickly recaptured and sent to Toulon, a military port. One day he saves a sailor about to fall from the rigging. He plunges into the sea and manages to escape by establishing the belief that he has drowned. He uses his precarious freedom to go to Montfermeil, the location of the Thénardiers' inn. After burying his money in the woods, he frees Cosette from the Thénardiers' abominable guardianship and takes her into the protective anonymity of Paris.

In Paris, he lives like a recluse in a dilapidated tenement, the Gorbeau House, in an outlying district. In spite of his precautions, however, Javert manages to track him down. Valjean is forced to flee abruptly. After a hectic chase and imminent capture, he finds a miraculous refuge in a convent. With the cooperation of the gardener, Fauchelevent, a man whose life he has saved in the past, Valjean persuades the prioress to take him on as assistant gardener and to enroll Cosette as
a pupil. Valjean and Cosette spend several happy years in the isolation of the convent.

Hugo now turns to another leading character, Marius. Marius is a seventeen-year-old who lives with his grandfather, M. Gillenormand, a relic of the Old Regime. In a nearby town, Georges Pontmercy, Marius' father, a hero of the Napoleonic wars, lives in retirement. M. Gillenormand, by threatening to disinherit Marius, has forced Georges Pontmercy to relinquish custody of his son. He has completed the estrangement by communicating his aversion for Pontmercy to Marius. Consequently, the young man reacts almost impassively to his father's death. A fortuitous conversation reveals to Marius the depths of his father's love for him, and indignant at his grandfather's deception, he leaves home.

He takes refuge in the Latin Quarter and falls in with a group of radical students, the Friends of the A.B.C. Marius, who under his father's posthumous influence has just switched his allegiance from the monarchy to Napoleon, falls into a state of intellectual bewilderment. Material difficulties increase his unhappiness. Finally he manages to create a tolerable existence by finding a modest job, living frugally, and withdrawing into his inner dreams.

His peace is shattered when he falls passionately in love with a beautiful young girl in the Luxembourg Gardens. She is Jean Valjean's ward, Cosette. Too timid for bold actions, he courts her silently. A fatal indiscretion ruins his nascent love affair. He quizzes the doorman where the girl lives and a week later she
moves without leaving an address. For a long time Marius is unable to find a clue to his sweetheart's whereabouts and is overcome by despair.

Coincidence puts him back on the track. One day curiosity impels him to observe his neighbors through a hole in the wall. He glimpses a family — father, mother, and two daughters — living in unspeakable squalor. Soon after he witnesses the entrance of a philanthropist, M. Leblanc, and his daughter. To his immense surprise, the daughter is Cosette. His jubilation is replaced by consternation when he discovers that his neighbors are planning to draw M. Leblanc into a trap the same evening. Marius contacts the police and on the instructions of Inspector Javert returns to his room.

When Leblanc comes back, Marius' neighbor identifies himself as Thénardier, ties up his victim, and demands an exorbitant ransom. The plot fails with the timely arrival of the inspector. In the confusion of the arrest, Leblanc escapes.

Once again, the young girl has vanished. But Thénardier's daughter, who is selflessly in love with Marius, manages to find his sweetheart for him.

After worshiping Cosette from afar, Marius summons the courage to declare his love. Cosette reciprocates. For a whole month the couple lives a chaste and secret idyll, secret because Cosette intuitively guesses Valjean's hostility to the man who is usurping his place.
Marius' happiness is unwittingly shattered by Valjean, who, disturbed by a secret warning and the growing popular unrest in Paris, has decided to take Cosette to England. As a first step he moves to a hideaway prepared for this kind of emergency.

Absorbed by his love, Marius has been unaware of the deteriorating political situation. Now his private crisis is echoed by the crisis of an imminent insurrection. His friend Enjolras directs the erection of a barricade in front of the Corinth wine shop. The first enemy he has to deal with is found within the rebels' ranks. It is Javert, who is unmasked as a spy and tied up to await execution.

Marius, driven by despair, decides to seek death in the insurrection. He joins the fighters at the barricade and fights valiantly to the end. Valjean also joins the insurgents, but for special reasons. He has discovered Marius' relationship with Cosette and his role in the revolution. For Cosette's sake, he decides to protect the life of the man he abhors.

Before the final assault, Valjean volunteers to execute Javert. Instead, he spares the inspector's life and sends him away. Then Valjean returns to the barricade as the few surviving defenders are driven inside the wine shop. He seizes the seriously wounded Marius, disappears into a manhole, and undertakes a heroic and harrowing passage through the sewers of Paris. Unfortunately, Javert arrests him at the exit. However, he allows Valjean to take Marius to his grandfather and later, in a quandary, releases Valjean. But he cannot forgive himself for this breach of duty and commits suicide.
Marius’ life has a happier ending. He recuperates from his wounds and overcomes his grandfather's hostility to his marriage. The marriage, however, is a mortal blow to Valjean. He has confessed his past to Marius, and the latter, in spite of his magnanimity, slowly estranges Cosette from Valjean. Marius does not know that Valjean is the man who saved his life in the sewers. Without Cosette, Valjean's life loses its meaning and he slowly withers away. Thénardier, however, unwittingly reveals to Marius that Valjean is his savior, and Marius and Cosette arrive in time to console Jean Valjean on his deathbed.

Taken from:

APPENDIX B

BIOGRAPHY OF VICTOR HUGO

Victor Hugo was born on February 26, 1802, the son of a Breton mother and a father from northeastern France. His works show the influence of both racial strains: the poetic mysticism which marks Celtic literature from the Arthurian romances to Chateaubriand and the earthy vigor of the peasant of Lorraine.

Although Hugo later claimed he descended from a family of the minor nobility, his father, General Joseph Léopold Hugo, was the son of a carpenter, and like many men of the Napoleonic era, he rose through valor and merit to power and influence in Napoleon's citizen army.

General Hugo was attached to the entourage of Joseph Bonaparte, and his duties took him to Naples and to Spain. Victor visited him in Italy at the age of five and went to school in Madrid in 1811. Traces of these exotic memories will be found in his later poetry and plays. However, Mme. Hugo, a strong-minded and independent personality, did not like the unstable existence of an army wife and in 1812 settled in Paris. Here her three sons, of whom Victor was the youngest, received their first orderly education.

As a result of this estrangement, General Hugo formed a liaison that took on a permanent character, and after Waterloo the Hugos arranged a separation. General Hugo, however, refused to leave his sons with their mother and sent them to a boarding school.
Victor Hugo suffered, but not acutely, from this separation from his mother. He was already, at fifteen, in love with a neighbor's daughter, Adéle Foucher, and was planning a brilliant literary career so that he could marry her. An excellent student in literature and mathematics, in 1817 he received an honorable mention from the Académie Française for a poem entered in a competition, and in 1819 he won first place in another national poetry contest.

When his mother died in 1821, he refused to accept any financial support from his father and endured a year of acute poverty, but in 1822, his first volume of verse, *Odes at Poésies diverses*, won him a pension of 1,000 francs a year from Louis XVIII. On the strength of this he promptly married Adéle, and during the following years four children were born to the Hugos.

Already in 1824, Hugo was a member of the group of Romantic rebels who were attempting to overthrow the domination of classical literature, and in 1830, he became one of the leaders when his historical drama *Hernani* won the theater audience and broke the stranglehold of the classical format on the stage. It also made him rich, and during the next fifteen years, six plays, four volumes of verse, and the novel *Notre Dame de Paris* (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) established his position as the leading writer of France.

His connection with the stage also had effects on his personal life. In 1831, a rupture developed in the Hugo household when Sainte-Beuve, one of Hugo's closest friends and a well-known Romantic critic, fell in love with Adéle Hugo and received some encouragement. The next year, Hugo met a young actress,
Juliette Drouet, who in 1833 became his mistress and quit the stage. Supported by a modest pension from Hugo, she became for the next fifty years his unpaid secretary and traveling companion.

In 1843, the failure of Hugo's last drama, Les Burgraves, and the death of his eldest daughter, drowned on her honeymoon, caused him to abandon poetry temporarily for politics. This sharp change of direction in Hugo's career was paralleled in the lives of a number of other Romantic authors — for instance, Lamartine and George Sand. In the face of a rapidly growing and changing French society, plagued by social problems of all kinds, many writers came to feel that it was not enough simply to write beautiful and moving works of art but that their talents should be more directly applied in helping the poor and oppressed. In effect, this changing mood marks the end of the Romantic era in French literature and the opening of the Realistic-Naturalistic period.

Originally a royalist like his mother, Hugo's reconciliation with his father in 1822 broadened his political views, and he was, by this time, a moderate republican. He was made a peer of France in 1845 and made a number of speeches on social questions of the time.

With the revolution of 1848 and the founding of the Second Republic, Hugo was elected deputy to the Constitutional Assembly. Three years later, when Louis Napoleon abolished the republic by a coup d'etat and reestablished the empire, Hugo risked his life trying vainly to rally the workers of Paris against the new emperor and had to flee to Brussels disguised as a workman.
The next nineteen years of Hugo's life were spent in exile, first on the island of Jersey, then on Guernsey. His family and Mlle Drouet accompanied him into exile. From his island in the English channel Hugo continued to inveigh against the man he considered the perverter of republican liberties, and 1852 and 1853 saw the writing of the satires *Napoléon le Petit* and *Les Châtiments*. He also turned again to poetry and the novel, publishing the philosophical *Les Contemplations* and the remarkable "history of man's conscience," *La Légende des Siecles*. Three novels also occupied him: *Les Misérables*, first begun many years before; *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (1866), and *L'Homme qui rit* (1869).

Following the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the empire in 1870-71, Hugo returned to Paris. It was a triumphal return: He was greeted at the station by an immense crowd and was accompanied through the streets to his hotel amid shouts of "Vive Victor Hugo!" He remained in Paris throughout the siege of the city, and the revenues from the first French publication of *Les Châtiments* bought two cannons to defend the city. In 1871, the death of one of his sons took him for some time to Brussels; he then returned to Guernsey until the death of another son brought him back to Paris in 1873. He was elected to the Senate in 1876, but two years later poor health forced him to return to the tranquility of Guernsey. His later years were saddened not only by the death of his sons but by that of Mme. Hugo in 1868 and of Mlle. Drouet in 1882.

Hugo himself died in 1885 at the age of eighty-three. His last wishes were, "I leave 50,000 francs to the poor. I wish to be taken to the cemetery in the hearse
customarily used for the poor. I refuse the prayers of all churches. I believe in God."

Despite the austerity of his wishes, his funeral was the occasion of a national tribute to France's greatest writer. His body lay in state under the Arc de Triomphe guarded by horsemen with flaming torches, and twelve poets watched around his bier. On the day of the funeral, a million spectators followed his cortege, and the Pantheon, a church under Napoleon III, was once again transformed into a national sepulcher to receive his remains. He lies there today, amid France's great men.

Victor Hugo has frequently been criticized for vanity of character and shallowness of mind. The vanity of which he was accused is largely justified by the immense scope of his talents, unparalleled in literary history since Shakespeare and Goethe. It is true that he was not a profound thinker, but his devotion to "the good, the beautiful and the true," if uncritical, was instinctive and sincere. The people of France whom he loved have judged him better than the critics, and he remains to this day one of France's best-loved authors.

Hugo's career, covering as it does most of the nineteenth century, spans both the Romantic and the Realist movements, but it cannot be said — despite Hugo's initial fame as a Romantic poet — to belong to one movement more than the other. His superb use of the colorful and significant detail, which produces exoticism in *Les Orientales* and local color in *Notre Dame de Paris*, becomes, when applied to the modern scene in *Les Misérables*, the sheerest realism. He is
never, like Stendhal and Flaubert, objective and impassive in the face of the scene he describes, but he is always more interested in the external world than in the inner world of his own feelings; and the passionate spirit with which he describes what he sees is no more "romantic" than Zola's. If the themes of his poetry are often Romantic, his concern for art and technique makes him a brother to the Parnassians; and the epic quality of all his work links him with Chateaubriand and de Vigny, on the one hand, and with Zola, on the other. Only as a dramatist can he be considered purely a Romantic.

Hugo is among the greatest poets of a century of great poets. He claims this place not only because of the immense volume of his production, spread over nearly sixty years, but because of the variety of his themes and techniques.

Hugo's poems deal with an unusually wide range of themes. Romantic love and the evocation of nature are, of course, among them, but he also deals ably and movingly with current events of the day, descriptions of exotic and historic scenes, philosophy, parenthood and grandparenthood. His satires are as powerful as his lyrics; no strain is foreign to his lyre.

As a poetic technician, Hugo is a great innovator. He is one of the first to move away from the classical tradition of the Alexandrine couplet (which, nevertheless, he can handle magnificently) toward more complex and subtle forms of verse borrowed from the Middle Ages and from his own rich imagination. He reshifts not only the form but the vocabulary of poetry and injects it with a new variety and richness.
In contrast with most poets who are skilled in the use of only two or three poetic devices, Hugo is master of all. He is a splendid rhetorician but is also adept in the music of poetry. And he employs not only the music of skillful phrasing but the sound of the words themselves to awaken and charm the inner ear of the imagination. When in *L'Expiation* he writes, "Après une plaine blanche, une autre plaine blanche," not only the repetitive phrase but the flat echo of the open vowels call up the image of Russia's endless expanses.

He is also a master of imagery, not only simile and metaphor but symbol. He advises poets to interpret their "interior world of images, thoughts, sentiments, love and burning passion to fecundate this world" through "the other visible universe all around you" (*Pan*, 1831); and he can almost always find a vivid and exact natural parallel to the landscape of his soul. In all these respects, he is the precursor and inspiration for the poets who follow: Baudelaire, the Parnassians, and the Symbolists are all to a large extent his disciples and his debtors.

In the preface to *Cromwell* of 1827-28, Hugo serves as spokesman for the Romantic movement in attacking classical drama and in laying down the precepts of the new drama to be. He condemns the rigidity of both classical format and language: the unities of time, scene, and action, and the false and formal elegance of speech. He calls for a richer and more flexible verse, which will more closely approximate the rhythm of everyday speech, and a more flexible format, which will allow comedy and tragedy to mingle in Shakespearean fashion, just as they do in life itself. Weary of the eternal Greek kings and Roman heroes of the classical stage, he suggests that more recent history may also provide suitable
themes for drama and that a bourgeois or a bandit may also sometimes possess enough nobility to transform a stage.

These precepts he exemplified in his own plays, some of which are in prose as well as in verse and which generally deal with some dramatic episode from European history. The subjects of Marie Tudor and Lucrezia Borgia are self-explanatory. Hernani, which quite literally caused a riot at its first performance, sets at odds a noble Spanish bandit and Charles V, Emperor of Spain; in Ruy Blas, a valet, through the love of a queen, temporarily becomes head of state.

We cannot today appreciate Hugo's plays as wholeheartedly as did his contemporaries. His plots, with their disguises and recognitions, seem a little too melodramatic; his daring adventurers and his perfect, passionate, unattainable heroines are two-dimensional. Nevertheless, particularly in their historical accuracy of incident and decor, they represent a great stride toward realism in the drama; in the stage's own terms, some of them are still "marvelous theater."

Taken from: