

# The Count of Monte Cristo Theme Essay

Prompt: Write a literary analysis essay based on a theme from The Count of Monte Cristo. The purpose of this analysis is to address the underlying message you believe Alexandre Dumas desires to communicate about your chosen theme. Be careful! This is a literary analysis essay, not a plot summary. You are not simply trying to prove that your chosen theme exists in the book. Rather, you should seek to uncover the deeper significance of your chosen theme, as revealed through the characters and plot.

Choose one of the following themes:

- Love/Hate- What message does Dumas communicate about love and/or hate through the actions and words of his characters? Does this message line up with a Biblical worldview?

(note: Loyalty/Friendship can count as 'love')

- Justice/Revenge- What message is Dumas presenting about justice and vengeance? According to the author's reasoning, is the count's revenge justified? What about the "collateral damage" that occurs? How does it fit into this idea? Does this worldview line up with scripture?
- Providence- What message does Dumas present about God and His role in the affairs of men? Is this a Biblical worldview?

## STEP 1- CHOOSE YOUR THEME & BRAINSTORM

Use the questions listed next to your chosen theme to think about the underlying message Dumas may be communicating to his reader about this theme. Do a free write in class to develop your idea.

## STEP 2- FORM A THESIS STATEMENT

Remember, your thesis statement must clearly present your chosen theme, address the deeper message communicated about the theme, and be arguable (someone could disagree). Remember, no 3-pronged thesis statements! Your controlling ideas will appear as your body paragraph topic sentences for the first time.

### STEP 3- PROVE IT!

Create a keyword outline (begun in class) to organize your ideas into paragraphs. Include a clear topic idea and two more focused assertions for each paragraph. Use your quote journal to select proof for your topics and note the idea of the quote and citation on the outline. Your quotes must be spread throughout the book- you cannot use two quotes from the same place in the story.

### STEP 4- CREATE A BODY PARAGRAPH OUTLINE

Use the attached template to create your outline. Make sure that your ideas are easy to understand, even though your full sentences are not present. At this stage, type out the full quote you will use (copy carefully, add words with square brackets if needed, or remove extra words with an ellipses). Include citations you will use in your paper.

### STEP 5- WRITE YOUR ESSAY

Length Requirement: 5 paragraphs, 2 full pages See grading rubric for specific essay requirements. Work with your parent to develop your ideas into sentences.

Rough Draft Expectations:

- Must follow proper MLA format
- Must meet minimum page requirement (2 full pages, 5 paragraphs)
- Must contain all structural elements
- Should show evidence of proofreading
- **Note: You will not receive tutor feedback on this rough draft!** You will be doing your first 'peer review' in class and will use that feedback (and your parents) to work on revisions for the final draft. You may ask for tutor help throughout the writing of the paper if you need more support. I am happy to answer specific questions before and after PEP, and sit down with a student and parent to work through the process if needed.

Final Draft Expectations:

- Refer to the grading rubric for all required elements. (Use this as you proofread!) Must be submitted to Turnitin on time for a homework grade.
- Must be proofread by a parent and all corrections made on a clean copy.
- Submit the typed outline, the peer-reviewed draft, and the clean final copy in a folder, along with the signed parent checklist.

### Body Paragraph Outline Template (step 4)

Thesis Statement: (Type out your tutor-approved thesis statement here and underline it. You will remove the underlining when you put it as the last line of your introduction).

#### I. Body Paragraph 1 Topic (broad enough to write two ‘proofs’ about)

##### A. 1<sup>st</sup> Assertion

1. 1<sup>st</sup> quote with citation (written out)
2. Commentary/Explanation (How does this example relate to your thesis?)
3. Transition word or phrase (become part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> assertion)

##### B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Assertion

1. 2<sup>nd</sup> quote with citation (written out)
2. Commentary/Explanation (How does this example relate to your thesis?)

##### C. Clincher/Conclusion (must reflect topic idea but not exactly repeat.)

(Follow this same template for body paragraphs 2 and 3. The assignment should be one long document when finished, not three separate ones. You will receive a grade based on the structure of this outline in order to practice the MLA format, so work to set it up according to this example! The second paragraph should be Roman Numeral II and the third Roman Numeral III.)

Tutor Grading Scale:

5 points: Formatting: MLA format

8 points: Word Choice: No 'be verbs' in the thesis statement, topic sentences and conclusion sentences, or restated thesis; limited 'be verbs' used in interior sentences.

8 points: All sentences are complete and make sense (no fragments or run-on sentences).

6 points: Literary Present Tense used when talking about the story

8 points: No contractions, first-person pronouns (I, me, we, us) or second-person pronouns (you, your) unless used inside a quote from the text.

10 points: Paragraphs flow from one idea to the next using transitions, both to start the paragraph and to move to the second assertion.

10 points: Story context has been given when making the assertions, either in the assertion itself, or in the blend of the quote. The essay has NOT turned into a summary or book report.

10 points: All quotes are 'blended' into your own sentence, and make sense with the blend. Extra words have been removed with an ellipse, and any needed words have been added in brackets.

10 points: Quotes are properly cited at the end of the sentence, with the author's last name in parenthesis along with the page number, or only the page number if the author's name is used in the blend.

20 points: The thesis of the essay has been proven throughout and the evidence proves the assertions. The commentary explains the proof. The conclusion wraps up the whole paragraph.

5 points: Essay submitted in a folder along with the graded outline and a signed parent checklist.

**Count Theme Essay Brainstorming:**

Chosen Theme: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions:

What message does Dumas present in the book with this theme?

What does a Biblical Worldview look like on this subject?  
(include verses that come to mind on the topic)

Do the two agree? Why or why not?

What characters and/or scenes in the book show this?

## Constructing a thesis statement:

Theme chosen: \_\_\_\_\_

Dumas' message: \_\_\_\_\_

Biblical Worldview: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you arguing that they agree or not? \_\_\_\_\_

Put all of these components into one strong sentence! Check for be verbs!

Template (you do not have to stick with this- just a jumping-off place):

Throughout the story, Dumas uses the theme of \_\_\_\_\_ to send a (Biblical/non-Biblical) message that \_\_\_\_\_ as shown through the actions and words of his characters.

\*Remember, you will be writing an introduction paragraph that tells the name of the book and the author's full name, so it is a good idea to use the last name only in your thesis statement.

Thesis statement workout zone:

Print your thesis statement very neatly in pencil for approval:

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Count Theme Essay Keyword Outline Assignment - Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Creative Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Thesis Statement (Copy Here):

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I. First Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Assertion 1: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Quote (Evidence) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Commentary: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Transition (becomes part of the next sentence): \_\_\_\_\_

B. Assertion 2: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Quote (Evidence) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Commentary \_\_\_\_\_

3. Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

II. Second Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Assertion 1: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Quote (Evidence) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Commentary: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Transition (becomes part of the next sentence): \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Assertion 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Quote (Evidence) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Commentary \_\_\_\_\_

3. Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

**III. Third Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Assertion 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Quote (Evidence) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Commentary: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Transition (becomes part of the next sentence): \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Assertion 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Quote (Evidence) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Commentary \_\_\_\_\_

3. Conclusion: \_\_\_\_\_

## Outline Parent Checklist:

- Are the paragraph topics ordered in a way that makes sense? For example, if talking about Faria and also about Valentine, Faria comes first in the story, so he should come first in the essay.
- Is the Topic Sentence broad with the two assertions narrowing it down to more specific ideas?
- Does the evidence chosen prove the assertion?

Note on evidence/citations: On this form, the student does not need to copy out the entire quote, just the general information and the citation.

Example:

Evidence: The count tells Villefort he is an agent of providence (Dumas 213).

Verify that each quote is really on that page. Quotes must come from our version, not from an online search.

- Do the topic sentence and conclusion sentences form ‘bookends’ to the paragraph?  
They will have the same idea, but when the sentences are written out, the conclusion will need to ‘wrap it up’ in light of what was proven in the paragraph. Have your student change the wording of the conclusion phrase to signal that the actual sentence will need to be different.  
Example:  
Topic phrase: Pineapple makes pizza healthier  
Conclusion phrase: pizza needs pineapple to elevate its nutrition
- Does the mid-paragraph transition word clearly lead to the next assertion?  
At this level, make the transition very obvious. There are more elegant ways of transitioning, but the lesson being taught here is to **feel** the transition. Use strong words like “Additionally”, “Furthermore”, “Moreover”, and “In addition”
- Does the commentary explain why the evidence is good? Guide the student to explain out loud why they have chosen that particular quote. We teach in class to avoid starting with phrases like “This shows that”. Instead, go straight for the analysis! Dig deep!

Parent signature of checklist completion: \_\_\_\_\_

## Count Theme Essay Parent Checklist

- MLA formatted Introduction, 3 Body Paragraphs, Conclusion, Work Cited
- Word Choice:
  - No 'be verbs' in the thesis statement, topic sentences, conclusion sentences, and restated thesis (in the conclusion paragraph)
  - The name of the book is in italics every time it appears
  - The author's full name is used one time only
  - No contractions
  - No first-person pronouns (I, me, we, us) or second-person pronouns (you, your) unless used inside a quote from the text
  - Literary Present Tense used for the story
- All sentences are complete and make sense (no fragments or run-on sentences)
- Paragraphs flow from one idea to the next using **transitions**, both to start the paragraph and to move to the second assertion.
- Correct story context has been given when making the assertions, either in the assertion itself or in the blend of the quote. The essay has NOT turned into a summary or book report.
- All quotes are 'blended' into the student's own sentence, and make sense. Extra words have been removed with an ellipse, and any extra words needed for clarity have been added in brackets.
- Quotes are properly cited at the end of the sentence (Dumas 45).
- The thesis of the essay has been proven throughout and the evidence proves the assertions. The commentary explains the proof. The conclusion wraps up the whole paragraph.

Parent Signature (please do not sign until you have verified that all of the above are correct)

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Count Peer Review:

Student Essay: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

- All pieces of the essay are present
  - List any missing pieces \_\_\_\_\_
- MLA Format
  - List any problems \_\_\_\_\_
- Literary Present tense used when talking about the story and characters
- Introduction
  - Hook
  - Transition to background
  - Background info on theme/story
  - Author's full name used one time
  - Title of the book in italics
  - Final sentence is the Thesis statement (no be verb)
- Body paragraph 1
  - Topic sentence : no be verb, states topic clearly, uses transition wording
  - Assertion 1: narrows topic to a specific point (may use story context)
  - Blended quote
  - Citation
  - Commentary: explains why the quote proves the point. Does not start with "This"
  - Transition word
  - Assertion 2
  - Blended quote
  - Citation
  - Conclusion (wraps up whole paragraph- no be verb allowed)
- Body paragraph 2
  - Topic sentence: no be verb, states topic clearly, begins by mentioning last topic
  - Assertion 1: narrows topic to a specific point (may use story context)
  - Blended quote
  - Citation
  - Commentary: explains why the quote proves the point. Does not start with "This"
  - Transition word
  - Assertion 2
  - Blended quote
  - Citation
  - Conclusion (wraps up whole paragraph- no be verb allowed)

- Body paragraph 3
    - Topic sentence: no be verb, states topic clearly, begins by mentioning last topic
    - Assertion 1: narrows topic to a specific point (may use story context)
    - Blended quote
    - Citation
    - Commentary: explains why the quote proves the point. Does not start with 'This'
    - Transition word
    - Assertion 2
    - Blended quote
    - Citation
    - Conclusion (wraps up whole paragraph- no be verb allowed)
  
  - Conclusion paragraph
    - Restated thesis (different wording from thesis, but same idea- look back. No be verb)
    - Summary of main points (not re-argued)
    - Call to action/ look to the future (what the reader should learn type message)
    - Final sentence that refers back to the hook idea
  
  - Any confusing sentences?
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- Has the thesis been proven?
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