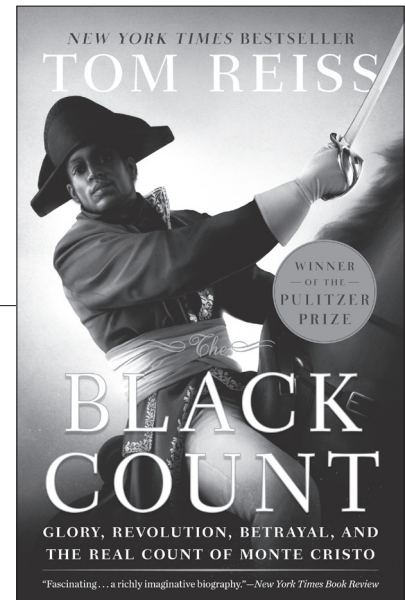




The Black Count

Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the
Real Count of Monte Cristo

by Tom Reiss



Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

Winner of the Pen Award

Finalist for the National
Book Critics Circle Award

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READING LEVEL: 12TH Grade

“Fascinating . . . a richly imaginative biography.” —*New York Times Book Review*

“*The Black Count* is a dazzling achievement. I learned something new virtually on every page. No one who reads this magnificent biography will be able to read *The Count of Monte Cristo* or any history of slavery in the New World in the same way again.”

—Henry Louis Gates Jr., Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute, Harvard University

“Teens interested in military history, particularly of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Era, will enjoy this book; the discussion of differences in slavery and the treatment of blacks in France and America is particularly enlightening.” —*School Library Journal*

• about the author •

Tom Reiss is the author of the celebrated international bestseller *The Orientalist*. His biographical pieces have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times* and other publications.

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• about the book

The Black Count: Glory, Revolution, Betrayal, and the Real Count of Monte Cristo, by Tom Reiss, tells the fascinating true story of Thomas-Alexandre Dumas, a black man whose achievements distinguish him as one of the greatest military leaders of his time. The son of a French aristocrat and a black slave from the colony of Saint-Domingue (modern-day Haiti), Dumas enlisted in the French army in 1786 and quickly rose to the highest rank that would be achieved by a man of color until Colin Powell—nearly 200 years later. The story of an underdog who triumphed against all odds, Dumas' saga is at the same time the story of the world's first civil rights movement, with France's march toward what Reiss calls a "revolutionary age of racial emancipation," and the heartbreaking reversal of equal rights that took place after Napoleon's ascent to power.

At its core, however, *The Black Count* tells a story of enduring bonds between fathers and sons. Although General Dumas died when his namesake, Alexandre Dumas, was only four years old, his son became one of the most beloved novelists of all time. While General Dumas ended up largely forgotten by history, the novelist Dumas used his remarkable life story to create some of literature's most iconic heroes in classics such as *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Yet the father's life is in many ways more unbelievable than the son's novels.

Here is a history book that teens can love. "Mom, if they taught history like this in school? The children would never want to go home. They'd beg the teacher to keep reading."¹ That's what one excited teenager told his mother when she gave him *The Black Count*. For another young man, "[I]t trumped the big screen, the Xbox, and all the games and toys."² Sensing the book's appeal to youth, many adult readers have urged that it be assigned in high schools. "If I ever had the chance to teach the French Revolution or Napoleonic France," wrote one, "it would certainly be with this book. Sweeping world events are personalized . . . in a way that makes them meaningful and understandable."³ Others have emphasized how *The Black Count* would bring passion into otherwise "boring" history classes: "I am not one who grew up loving history, but if the books had been written like this, I would have fallen in love with the subject and not dreaded the classes."⁴ Numerous others echo the sentiment.

The Black Count provides teachers with material for thought-provoking classroom discussions and writing assignments on social issues such as racial prejudice and the possibility of overcoming it, imperialism, democracy and dictatorship, and the role of the military in society. It delivers food for thought as well on broader topics such as leadership, courage, principle, and ambition.

An enthralling adventure that "reads like a novel but packs the facts of a textbook," as one reader put it,⁵ *The Black Count* makes an ideal text for Western Civilization or World History studies. It offers students a stunning example of the unexpected turns past societies have taken, the fickleness of historical memory, and lessons in judging the merits of primary and secondary sources—not to mention an engrossing narrative of Caribbean slave society, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic era.

Paired with *The Count of Monte Cristo* or *The Three Musketeers*, *The Black Count* presents an outstanding nonfiction choice for World Literature as well. Students will be fascinated by the real-life background of the novelist's fictions. Comparing the enthralling events of General Dumas' life with his son's action-packed tales generates ready-made topics for writing and discussion.

Carrying a message from the French and Haitian past that resonates with today's American promise of racial equality, *The Black Count* will be a unique and popular addition to the high school curriculum.

1 Ajali Shabazz to Tom Reiss, Facebook, December 2, 2012.

2 Detra Jackson to Tom Reiss, Facebook, December 26, 2012.

3 <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/414907467>

4 <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/386090632>

5 <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/379846331>

• about this guide

The questions and activities in this Teacher's Guide were written to support standards-based instruction. Because content of *The Black Count* is aligned with curriculum in courses most commonly taught at the 9th- or 10th-grade level, World History and World Literature, the decision was made to align the guide with 9th- and 10th-grade history and English standards. However, the text meets the standard for **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity** for grades 11–12 as well as 9–10, so this guide is easily adaptable for junior or senior classes.

A complete list of the Common Core State Standards can be found at <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>.

This Teacher's Guide is divided into three sections. The first section, “**Guided Reading Questions**,” will help students with reading comprehension and analysis. These questions can be used as a guide for annotating the text, written responses, or group discussions. The second section, “**Writing Prompts**,” is subdivided into genres based on the writing standards. The topics in the third section, “**Topics for Further Research**,” will require students to conduct and synthesize significant outside research on subjects related to the text.

• note to teachers

While *The Black Count* is a text that can be read in either English or history classes independently of the novels of Alexandre Dumas *The Count of Monte Cristo*, it is an ideal choice for a multidisciplinary unit that includes this classic as a literary text and encourages reading and writing across the curriculum.

• before you read

Teachers may want to begin by assessing the level of background knowledge that students have about the French Revolution and leading them in a guided research activity to answer the “Five W Questions” about the Revolution. A short journaling activity about the meaning of the words “Liberty,” “Equality,” and “Fraternity” will help engage students in concepts that are critical to understanding the Revolution.

• guided reading questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Prologue, Part 1

1. What sources for information did Dumas use when he wrote about his father?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. Explain the connection between the childhoods of Dumas and Haydée.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Prologue, Part 2

1. Consult general or specialized reference materials to determine the meaning of the term “ancien régime.” CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4c

• guided reading questions continued

2. What unexpected obstacle did Reiss encounter when he traveled to the Musée Alexandre Dumas to view primary sources related to the life of General Dumas?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. Reiss refers to General Dumas as a “soldier’s general” (page 8). Based on the context, what do you think the term “soldier’s general” means?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4a CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
4. Conduct a Web search to find contemporary figures that have been described as “soldier’s generals” and compare them with General Dumas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6
5. According to Reiss, what was the “world’s first civil rights movement” (page 10)? How did this political climate impact the life of General Dumas?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
6. What story did Dumas publicly claim as the inspiration for *The Count of Monte Cristo*?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
7. Who are the “Dumasians,” and how did they help Reiss?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Book One

The Sugar Factory

1. Compare the map of colonial Saint-Domingue (page 22) with a modern-day map of Haiti and discuss the changes. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. Explain the importance of the sugar trade during the eighteenth century.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. Explain the circumstances that led the De la Pailleteries to become sugar planters in the colony of Saint-Domingue. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
4. Explain how the slave trade changed over time. What factors led to Africans becoming a population disproportionately associated with slavery?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
5. What was the Code Noir? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
6. Describe the relationship between Charles and Antoine de la Pailleterie.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

The Black Code

1. Explain the meaning and etymology of the word “marron.” CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4c
2. Where did Alexandre Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie go after the falling out with his brother Charles? What factors made it especially difficult to locate him?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. According to the Code Noir, under what circumstances was a mixed-race child considered legitimate? Explain how this provision might provide a “route to social mobility for people of color” (page 39). Explain the term “*libre de fait*” (page 40).
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
4. Where did Thomas-Alexandre grow up? Describe the social, political, and cultural climate of the city. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
5. Describe the laws that were passed as an attempt to suppress the cultural influence of mixed-race men and women in the colonies.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Norman Conquest

1. Why did Charles de la Pailleterie return to France? Since his elder brother, Antoine, could not be located, what title did Charles claim?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. Explain Charles's connection to Monte Cristo.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. Describe the circumstances that led to Antoine's return to France. What did he do with his mistresses and mixed-race children when he left the colonies? What provision did he make for his favored son, Thomas-Alexandre?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

“No One Is a Slave in France”

1. Describe Thomas-Alexandre's education. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. Explain how Joseph Boulogne became the Chevalier de Saint-Georges.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
3. In your own words, explain the “freedom principle” (page 61). In 1691, what did Louis XIV acknowledge regarding the rights of slaves once they landed on French soil?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
4. The trial of Jean Boucaux laid the foundation for legal arguments against slavery. Summarize the key points that Jean's lawyers used to define and defend the rights of blacks in France. Summarize the Verdelins' lawyer's arguments. What was the court's decision? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. In aftermath of the trial of Jean Boucaux, what edict did Louis XV pass as an attempt to halt more “freedom suits”? What was the immediate effect of this edict?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
6. Who was Guillaume Poncet de la Grave? What did he believe about the rights of blacks?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
7. What was the Police des Noirs? What were some of its key provisions?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

Americans in Paris

1. Describe the qualities that made the young Thomas-Alexandre especially successful in French society. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. What did the term “American” mean in late-eighteenth-century France?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
3. Explain the role that France played during the American Revolution.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. Based on the details in the text, how would you describe the relationship between Antoine de la Pailleterie and his son Thomas-Alexandre?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Black Count in the City of Light

1. In your own words, paraphrase the incident involving Thomas-Alexandre and Jean-Pierre Titon de Saint-Lamain at Nicolet's theater.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. What changes did Dumas make to the story of his father's arrest when he wrote about it in his autobiography? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

• guided reading questions continued

A Queen's Dragoon

1. What event appears to have caused a rift between Thomas-Alexandre and his father?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. Thomas-Alexandre chose to pursue a military career. What unusual choice did he make about the way he enlisted? What choice did he make about the name under which he enlisted? Why do you think he made these choices?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. What happened to the De la Pailleterie estate and fortune?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
4. What were the Dragoons? Where did they get their name?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
5. Summarize the tales that the novelist Dumas and others told about the strength and valor of Private Dumas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
6. Explain the factors that contributed to the start of the French Revolution. What role did the French military play in the overthrow of the ancien regime?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

Book Two

Summers of Revolution

1. Explain the circumstances that led to Private Alex Dumas meeting Marie-Louise Labouret. What impression did the young soldier make on the Labouret family?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Describe the creation of the National Assembly. What important document was drafted as a result? How did the National Assembly initially deal with Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
3. What was the Jacobin club? What role did it play in the Revolution?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. How did Claude Labouret respond when Dumas asked permission to marry his daughter, Marie-Louise? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. Although King Louis XVI was not immediately deposed, his role changed significantly after the initial wave of the Revolution. Explain the symbolic significance of his new title: "King of the French." CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
6. How did the leaders of surrounding European countries initially respond to the French Revolution? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
7. After describing the events surrounding the Champs de Mars Massacre, Reiss states that, as revolutionary fervor intensified, "Alex Dumas would be threatened with the guillotine for his mere presence on the field that day." Explain why it could be potentially dangerous for Dumas to have been associated with the queen's regiment.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

Regeneration by Blood

1. What American ideals did Jacques-Pierre Brissot embrace? What issue did he disagree with American politicians about? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Explain how Brissot's belief that any soldier who fought against France was a "slave" helped shape France's military policy. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

- Describe the military reforms that were initiated by Count Jacques de Guibert and other French military philosophers. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- What was the target of the first preemptive military strike by the revolutionary government? What role did Corporal Dumas play in the strike? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- Describe the events that led to Dumas being promoted to the rank of sergeant. What patriotic gesture did he make after his promotion? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

The Black Heart Also Beats for Liberty

- What did the Edict of Fraternity (page 133) promise to revolutionaries in other nations? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- What were the “free legions” (page 133)? Which legion did Alex Dumas join? What rank was he offered in exchange for his service? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- Examine the factors that led to the extension of full citizenship to free blacks and “citizens of color” in both the colonies and France. Who supported this movement? Who opposed it? What was the immediate effect of the declaration on the French military? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
- After Dumas’ enlistment in the Black Legion, what personal milestone was he able to achieve? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- Describe one of the acts of Dumas’ heroism. By July 30, 1793, what military rank had he earned? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Mr. Humanity

- How quickly did Dumas advance in the military? What factors do you think contributed to his rapid rise? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- Why was the Committee of Public Safety established? Who were key leaders of the Committee? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- What was the *levée en masse*? Why was it necessary? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4
- What was Dumas’ first assignment as a general? According to his son’s memoir, what nickname was he given by the townspeople? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- Describe the relationship between Dumas and Paul-Ferdinand Dermoncourt. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- Why was Dumas initially reported to the Committee of Public Safety? How did he respond to the allegations against him? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- According to Reiss, what set Dumas apart from his contemporaries (page 157)? What was it about his personal history that made him such a loyal defender of the Republic? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

The Battle for the Top of the World

- Explain the strategic and symbolic importance of securing a military victory in the Alps. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- What was the source of the disagreement between General Dumas and Carnot? How was the situation resolved? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

• guided reading questions continued

3. In what specific ways did his friendship with Commissioner Gaston help Dumas?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. When preparing his final assault on Mount Cenis, what strategic move suggests that General Dumas was able to learn from the past? What was the outcome of the assault?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

The Bottom of the Revolution

1. Research the life of Maximilien de Robespierre. What role did he play in the Reign of Terror? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RHST.9-10.7
2. Why might it have been fortuitous that Dumas delayed his return to Paris to appear before the Committee of Public Safety? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. Explain the situation in Vendée. Why were the peasants angry with the Republic? How did Dumas handle the situation when he was placed in charge of the military forces in Vendée? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. Why did Dumas request leave from military service?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. In the late 1790s, what significant achievements were made in the movement for racial equality? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

The Siege

1. Using both the map on page 188 and Reiss's text as a reference, describe the political landscape of Italy in the early 1790s. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Who was appointed to lead the French Army of Italy? What was the goal of this military offensive? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
3. What tactics did Napoleon Bonaparte use to increase the wealth of the French military?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. What was Dumas' response to these tactics?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. Why was Mantua a strategically important city to conquer?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
6. Describe the military campaign over control of Mantua. What role did Dumas play in the eventual military victory? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
7. What upset General Dumas after the French defeated the Austrians and gained control of Mantua? What did he do that angered Napoleon? How did Napoleon respond?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

The Black Devil

1. What nickname did the Austrians give General Dumas? Do you think he deserved this title? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. What personal tragedy befell General Dumas during this time period? How did his personal anguish affect his performance on the battlefield?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
3. What evidence suggests that the rift between Napoleon and Dumas was repaired after Dumas' heroism in the Tyrol? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

Book Three

Leader of the Expedition

1. Why do you think Dumas may have considered resigning from the military?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. What preparations did Dumas find when he reported to his position in Toulon? What did this suggest about the nature of the military campaign he was joining?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
3. Who were the “savants”? What did their presence suggest about the objectives of Napoleon’s campaign? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
4. Who was Admiral Horatio Nelson? Where did he think Napoleon was heading?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. What dire prediction did the philosopher Volney make about attempts to seize or colonize Egypt? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
6. What reason did Napoleon give for wanting to seize Egypt? Do you think this would have been a reasonable explanation for invading the country? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
7. Why did Napoleon invade Malta before heading to Egypt? Explain who the Knights of Malta were and how Napoleon tricked them into helping the French army infiltrate the city.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
8. Describe some of the altruistic and not-so-altruistic things Napoleon did after he conquered Malta. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
9. What position was Dumas given during the Egyptian campaign? What was ironic about his assignment? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5
10. Describe the impression that Dumas made on the Egyptians. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

The Delirium of His Republicanism

1. Describe the brutal conditions that the French troops faced in Egypt.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Explain the circumstances of Dumas’ critique of Napoleon. When and where did the conversation take place? What was the source of Dumas’ frustration with Bonaparte?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
3. How did the Egyptians react to being “liberated” by the French?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. What tactic did Napoleon use to try to align himself with the Muslim population of Egypt? Was he successful? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. Examine the conflicting accounts of Dumas’ response when confronted by Napoleon (pages 249–251). Whose account do you find the most believable? In both versions of the confrontation, what did Dumas request? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
6. Summarize the key details of the naval battle (Battle of the Nile) that ended in the sinking of *the Orient*. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

Dreams on Fire

1. Why was the Battle of the Nile a key strategic victory for the British?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

• guided reading questions continued

2. What social and cultural contributions did the savants make during their tenure in Egypt? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
3. Describe the role that slavery played in the economy of Egypt. Explain why this was at odds with the basic tenets of the French Revolution. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
4. How did Dumas respond when he discovered a treasure of jewels and gold beneath an abandoned house? What does his response suggest about his character and ideology? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
5. How did Napoleon end his involvement in the Egyptian campaign? What does this suggest about his leadership style? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
6. What arrangements did Dumas make for his return to France? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

Prisoner of the Holy Faith Army

1. What was the first difficulty that Dumas encountered on his journey back to France? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Why Dumas' ship dock in the port of Taranto? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
3. Why did Dumas expect to receive aid from the government of Taranto? What sort of welcome did they receive? Explain the political shifts that had occurred in the Kingdom of Naples prior to the arrival of the *Belle Maltaise*. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
4. What was the goal of the Holy Faith Army? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. Why did the Holy Faith Army consider Dolomieu an enemy? In what ways does his story parallel the character of Abbé Faria in *The Count of Monte Cristo*? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
6. Describe Dumas' treatment during his captivity. How did his treatment change after the collapse of the Neapolitan republic? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

“Citizenship Dumas . . . Is Worried About the Fate of Her Husband”

1. Whom did Dumas' wife appeal to for information about her husband? How did this individual respond? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Describe the domestic and foreign crises that threatened the stability of the French Republic. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
3. Explain how Napoleon, with the help of his brother Lucien, seized control of the French government. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

The Dungeon

1. What caused Dumas to suspect that he was being poisoned? What evidence seemed to support his suspicion? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
2. What objects did the Friends of the French at Taranto manage to secretly give to Dumas? Why were these objects particularly useful? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

- Describe the friendships that Dumas made while he was in prison.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- Explain the circumstances that led to the release of Dumas. How long did he spend in prison? What physical condition was he in when he was released?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- What information about his imprisonment did Dumas choose to hide from his wife? Consult the endnotes for this chapter (pages 381–383) and describe the sources that Reiss used to research the details of Dumas' time in prison.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

Wait and Hope

- How did the government of Napoleon's France treat Dumas after his release from prison? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- How many years of emancipation and equality did citizens of color in France experience before their rights began to be taken away?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- Why did French plantation owners feel that Napoleon would be sympathetic to their requests to reinstitute slavery in the colonies?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- What steps did Napoleon take to strip citizens of color (both in the colonies and in France) of their rights? How were black or mixed-race soldiers treated?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
- What is the Legion of Honor? Why should Dumas have been eligible for this honor? Who originally petitioned for Dumas to be admitted to the Legion? Why was the request denied? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- When was Alexandre Dumas, the future novelist, born? Describe his relationship with his father. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- How did the death of General Dumas change the financial circumstances of the Dumas family? What benefits should she have been entitled to as the widow of a general and war hero? Why do you think she did not receive any assistance or compensation from Napoleon's government? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
- How was Dumas' experience growing up as a mixed-race child different from his father's experience? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

The Forgotten Statue

- How was General Dumas' biography changed between its publication in 1797 and 1808? What political events could have precipitated this change?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
- What happened to the statue honoring General Dumas that once stood in the Place des Trois Dumas? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- Who is Claude Ribbe? For what recognition has he campaigned for General Dumas to receive? What were the results of his campaign?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
- Describe the new statue in honor of General Dumas. Do you think it is an appropriate tribute to his life? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1

• writing prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

• argumentation topics

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1a-e

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

1. On page 231, Reiss describes Napoleon’s “maddeningly contradictory legacy” and states that Napoleon was “a dictator, a destroyer, and a harbinger of totalitarian leaders to come; he was also a liberator from a tyranny that had stalked Europe for a thousand years.” Select one of these contradictory labels and construct an argument paper that makes a case for the label you believe is the most accurate description of Napoleon Bonaparte. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
2. Compose an argument for posthumously awarding General Alex Dumas the designation of Chevalier in the Legion of Honor. As you construct your argument, consider the reasoning for excluding Dumas from this honor and offer a counterclaim. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8
3. Consider the recently installed memorial statue to General Dumas, which Reiss describes on page 330. Research and view images of the statue and discuss its symbolism. Do you believe the statue is an appropriate tribute to the life of Thomas-Alexandre Dumas? If so, explain your reasoning. If not, compose an argument for the design of a monument that would be an appropriate memorial. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. In the Epilogue, Reiss discusses the fact that the biography of General Dumas published in 1808 differs from an earlier version in that it neglects to mention the racial components of Thomas-Alexandre Dumas’ story. How important was Dumas’ racial identity in the context of his biography? Contrast the role that race played in Dumas’ life with the role that it plays today. To what extent does race continue to define identity? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. The Revolutionary leader Jacques-Pierre Brissot believed that the French military had a moral responsibility to launch a “crusade for universal freedom.” Should a nation’s military be used only for defense, or do governments have the right to use military force to promote their political ideology? At what point, if ever, should the military become involved in foreign conflicts that do not immediately threaten national security? Develop an argument regarding the role the military should play in domestic and foreign affairs. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8
6. What makes a person a good leader? By all accounts Thomas-Alexandre Dumas had a remarkable military career. Examine his biography and consider the personal qualities he possessed that helped him to become a successful soldier and leader. What lessons can his life teach us about leadership? Use specific examples from the life of General Dumas to develop your thesis. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
7. During General Dumas’ lifetime, he saw enormous progress in racial equality. Born into slavery, he grew into adulthood at a time when, suddenly, race was not a barrier to marriage, education, career advancement, or social status. Unfortunately, he also lived to see a reversal of civil rights and equality. Has our society finally achieved the vision of liberty and equality that Dumas fought to promote, or is there still progress that needs to be made? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

8. General Dumas passionately believed in the causes of liberty, equality, and brotherhood—so much so that he was willing to sacrifice his life to defend them. What ideal or cause are you passionate about? Craft a persuasive presentation to convince your classmates to take specific action about a cause that matters to you. Incorporate multimedia elements into your presentation to enhance the effectiveness of your argument. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4**
9. Examine the bibliography of the text and consider the primary sources that Reiss used to reconstruct the details of Dumas' life. What role did written correspondence (letters) play in his research? Two hundred years from now, how do you think technology will impact the historical record? **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1**

• explanatory prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10a-f

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

1. Compare the theme, plot, and characters from *The Count of Monte Cristo* with the life of General Dumas. What elements of his father's story did Alexandre Dumas incorporate into the story of Edmond Dantès? Compose a thorough literary analysis that examines the text as it relates to Dumas' biography.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1
2. Interspersed throughout the text are passages from the memoir of Dumas the novelist. Reiss often presents the excerpts along with evidence from other primary sources that verify or call into question Dumas' version of his father's story. Examine these sections (an example can be found on pages 144–145) and consider the sources that a memoirist uses versus the sources a biographer or historian uses. Thoughtfully examine the ways that memoir differs from biography. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.5 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.8**
3. How does the relationship between a father and son impact a person's identity and values? Examine the relationships between fathers and sons in *The Black Count*. Describe the relationship that Thomas-Alexandre had with his father, Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie. How did his father impact his life? Describe the relationship that Alexandre Dumas had with his father. How did it impact the novelist's life and writing? If you have read *The Count of Monte Cristo*, examine the relationship between Edmond Dantès and his father. In what ways was their fictional relationship drawn from the life of Dumas?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
4. Using specific examples from his professional and personal life, explain why the nickname "Mr. Humanity" is an appropriate epithet for General Dumas.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2
5. Examine the relationship between Napoleon and General Alex Dumas. What was the source of rivalry between the men? Why did Dumas dislike Napoleon? Why did Napoleon hate Dumas? How did the conflict between the men impact Dumas' career?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
6. Examine the love story between Marie-Louise Labouret and Thomas-Alexandre Dumas. Using specific details and excerpts from their correspondence whenever possible, explain how their relationship evolved and endured.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3
7. At one point Napoleon compared Dumas to the classical figure Horatius Cocles. Research the story of Horatius Cocles and explain why Napoleon's comparison was appropriate and relevant. **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RHST.9-10.7**

• narrative prompts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10a-e

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

1. Reiss's book gives details of several military campaigns (the battle for the French Alps, the Egyptian campaign, and so forth). Choose one of the campaigns that you found particularly interesting and compose a narrative account from the point of view of an enlisted soldier. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5
2. The novelist Dumas took stories that he had been told about his father and used them to craft his memoir. Interview an older family member or friend of the family and ask him or her to tell a story about one of your parents or siblings. Compose a narrative account based on the story that this individual tells you.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5
3. Reiss writes: "To remember a person is the most important thing in the novels of Alexandre Dumas. The worst sin anyone can commit is to forget" (page 3). Consider the role that memory plays in our lives. What memories have impacted your life? Compose a detailed personal narrative of a specific memory that has impacted your life. Include a reflection that examines how this memory has shaped you.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5
4. On pages 83–87, Reiss examines the circumstances involving the arrest of young Thomas-Alexandre Dumas and the excerpt from his son's memoir that relates the event with a much more triumphant and comical tone than the police reports suggest. Compose two narratives of an event that you have experienced or witnessed. In the first narrative, relate the events as objectively as possible. In the second narrative, use descriptive language and exaggeration of selected details to create a specific mood.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5
5. It's clear that the novelist Dumas' hero was his father. In fact, he used elements from his father's life to create some of the fictional heroes in his novels. Who is your hero? Using the steps of the archetypal Hero's Journey as your guide, compose a narrative account of your own personal hero's life. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5

• topics for further research

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

1. Compare primary documents from one of the "Freedom Principle" lawsuits mentioned in *The Black Count* with documents from the Somerset case in England and the Dred Scott case in the United States. What similarities and differences exist between the arguments from the prosecution and defense in all three cases? Were later lawsuits influenced by earlier rulings? As a class, re-create one or more of the trials and discuss the ways that the legal battle concerning emancipation has changed over time.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1a-d
2. The French were responsible for several advances in military philosophy and technology that gave them a military advantage and helped revolutionize warfare. Research the history of the development of a specific weapon that revolutionized combat in the past century. What were the intended and unintended consequences of its development?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9

3. Compare the primary texts: *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (France) and *The Declaration of Independence* (United States). What do the two documents have in common? Philosophically, where do they differ? Debate which of the two documents does a better job of ensuring individual liberty and which of the two documents is better for the common good.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1a-d
4. Examine the systematic infringement of civil rights that Napoleon imposed on citizens of color and compare his tactics with those of another dictator who systematically deprived a minority group of their liberty and equality. What lessons can history teach us about the protection of civil liberties? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9
5. Research the history of the *levée en masse* (military draft). Under what circumstances has a military draft been deemed necessary? Which groups of people suffer the most when a draft is imposed? What has been the public response to military drafts? Debate whether or not a period of military service should be mandated.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9
6. Research the history of General Dumas' birthplace, Saint-Domingue. What role did imperialism play in Haiti's history? Explain how the history of Haiti is linked to the history of New Orleans. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
7. Research the biography of Dumas *père* (the novelist) and his son, Dumas *fils*. How were they impacted by their father (and grandfather's) legacy? What role did their racial identities play in their lives? CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
8. What is imperialism? Research the role that a commodity such as sugar or coffee played in the development of empires during the era of colonialism. Focus your research on a specific colony, such as Saint-Domingue. What were the economic risks and benefits of colonization? What happened to the colony?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1
9. Research the establishment of the Committee of Public Safety and the subsequent Reign of Terror in France. How do government regimes use fear and intimidation to strip individuals of their rights? You may want to compare the tactics used by Napoleon with the totalitarian regimes in the writings of George Orwell.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9
10. In *The Black Count*, Reiss examines the impact that the French Revolution had on race relations in France. Research the way the Revolution impacted another disenfranchised population, such as women or another minority group. What gains were made in terms of liberty and equality? Were those gains later reversed?
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3

• other titles of interest:

1984—George Orwell

All Souls Rising—Madison Smartt Bell

Animal Farm—George Orwell

Georges—Alexandre Dumas

The Count of Monte Cristo—Alexandre Dumas

The French Revolution: A History—Thomas Carlyle

The Three Musketeers—Alexandre Dumas

- **also by Tom Reiss:**

The Orientalist

Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life

Random House | TR | 978-0-8129-7276-4 | 496pp. | \$17.00/\$21.00 Can.

e-Book: 978-1-58836-444-9 | \$13.99/\$13.99 Can.

- **about this guide's author:**

Amy Jurskis is the author of a number of teaching guides, including *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot and *In the Garden of Beasts* by Erik Larson. She holds a B.A. in English from the University of Georgia and an M.A.T. from Agnes Scott College. She currently serves as a chairperson of curriculum and an English teacher at Oxbridge Academy of the Palm Beaches in West Palm Beach, FL.



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