

Manon lescaut essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Manon Lescaut is basically the life story of a man named Chevalier Des Grieux. His tale starts when he was a boy of about fifteen; during a trip a pretty girl of about the same age catches his eye. He summons the courage to introduce himself and later, the two meet up to talk further. Chevalier learns of her father's orders to commit Manon to a convent (a prison, of sorts (it is also suggested at this point that she is very liberal.... in giving up her body to men)) and, being genuinely enraptured with this caring young man, she agrees to elope with him and the two sneak away to Paris in a carriage before the next dawn.

The two move into a simple Parisian apartment for a few weeks; the naive Chevalier is, quite viscerally, torn apart from his dear Manon from a scheme concocted, chiefly, by Manon herself. Chevalier is taken back to his home in the provinces to live with his family. His father keeps him under strict supervision so he will not run away again and after a few years Chevalier seems to be on a successful track to become a socially respectable religious leader. During a public speech, Manon (secretly) observes Chevalier and her feelings for him reignite.

She later locates him at his hotel in Paris and apologizes and confesses her undying love for him. After some livid restraint, Chevalier gives in to the irrationality of passionately derived emotion and renounces his years' work to, again, elope with the seductress Manon Lescaut. Instead of simply running away, however, Manon decides that she will steal her mister's jewels before they leave. This proves to be a mistake when the two end up being caught, arrested, and taken to separate prisons.

In prison, Chevalier befriends the Father/warden and takes slight advantage of his more lenient standards. However, to escape, he confronts the warden in his room at gunpoint and forces him to unlock several doors necessary for escape. In the process of escaping, he is forced to kill a prison porter. After his escape, Chevalier truly befriends Manon's brother, who simply goes by Lescaut. Lescaut aids Des Grieux in breaking Manon out of her prison. The escape plan was fairly simple and was achieved by a guard walking her right out the front door of the institution.

The two live happily in a cottage in the countryside for a good amount of time before fate catches up with them; a fire destroys their house and all of Des Grieux's savings. He tries so ensure both himself and Manon that they are, despite the loss, still financially stable. It has become apparent to Chevalier that Manon does truly care for him; she just needs constant entertainment and stimulation. She does not care about money itself, but rather on the stimulation that the money can buy her; if her vain needs are not met then she will stray.

She does stray away to another rich man who offers her material pleasures. When Chevalier catches up with her, she explains to him her plan of seducing him through a series of lies (where Des Grieux is supposedly her sickly little brother) carefully crafted to swindle more money from this "generous" man. The two are caught in the act and Manon is arrested once more. Des Grieux, through personal connections, has his charges against him dropped and is freed; he attempts to secure the same outcome for his beloved but cannot.

He meets up with her as she is being transported to an Atlantic port for shipment to a small colony in America. His pitiful state earns him a ticket on the ship that she is on; during this trip Manon seems to evolve into an adult and into a true lover. This becomes apparent after the two reach their very small and simple colonial settlement. She confesses that during the long journey across the ocean she was completely taken aback by Chevaliers loyalty and complete dedication to her and that she no longer craves trivial pleasures, she only wants him.

It is very apparent to both Des Grieux and the reader that her soulful confessions were sincere. Their life in America is, for a short time, perfect for them both. Whether it was fate, bad luck, or stupidity, Chevalier reignites a chaotic blaze that seems to follow their relationship everywhere by confessing to the governor that the two were, in fact, not married. The Governor's nephew is drawn to Manon (surprise..) and when he tries to come between them, Chevalier refuses to ever let anyone take her again and nearly kills the young nephew.

The lovers flee the town and eventually stop in a barren field where Manon dies. Manon Lescaut is a unique story of personal suffering. Crime and Punishment was said to be a revolutionary novel about personal suffering but the suffering that Chevalier experiences is of a complete different nature since he knowingly and willingly enters into his own suffering. He starts the story as a truly naive boy not knowing much about the works of lust and love. After being betrayed many times by his adored, he is able to reflect on his actions and rationalize them.

The interesting thing is that once he has matured to become a rational, reasoned thinker he still submits to his emotional whims. He can be labeled as a true man of passion for this reason: he knows very well the possible (even probable) repercussions and consequences of his actions as well as the emotional turmoil that they will inevitably bring to him but submits himself to these consequences anyways. He draws pity, intentionally, from everyone who will listen to his story.

This would typically make him an existentially dead character who is incapable of creating his own way; but somehow Prevost instills something heroic into his essence. Perhaps it is simply nice for readers to hear a tale about someone so consumed with passion that he will resign his entire life's wellbeing to obtain it. Perhaps it is simply reassuring to watch someone act on pure, untamed emotion despite a developed ability to reason. Perhaps this irrational and illogical behavior is actually admirable?