

# Les miserables essay: overview

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In Victor Hugo's novel *Les Miserales's*, one character plays a part in each of the other character's lives. Cosette, a little girl, is created to develop the rest of the "miserales" throughout the book. Fantine, Cosette's mother, digs herself into the shameless lifestyle of prostitution and poverty, while trying to support Cosette. The Thenardiers become her home while her mother leaves in search for work. There, Cosette is used to clean and work. Through Cosette, the Thenardier's are shown as they beat and punish Cosette, their "slave". Jean Valjean uses Cosette in a different way.

He takes her in as his "daughter" and finds companionship through her. Cosette is loved and cared for. As Cosette's character develops she is passed along from a pitiful mother who cannot support her; to the Thenardier's who beat and starve her; then, to Jean Valjean who takes Cosette in where she becomes his everything. Fantine, desperately in love with a man, Felix Tholomyes, whose feelings vary from hers, and yet she bears his child despite his fickle appearance. The illegitimate child, Cosette, is the outcome of her dying love toward him.

Cosette is used to show Fantine as a "miserable." Fantine leaves Cosette with the Thenardier's and goes in search for a job to support Cosette. As Cosette's character grows, she reveals how pitiful Fantine becomes. Fantine's devotion for Cosette, a little girl who is too young to give anything back in return, exposes us to one of the themes being forced to consider throughout the book, unrequited love. "My child is not cold anymore, I dressed her in my hair." Fantine does everything she can to work for money to support Cosette. She sacrifices her hair so that Cosette will have clothes.

Without Cosette Fantine could live her life for herself. She puts all her effort into a child that she does not see and which the child does not know who she is. The child, Cosette, is a symbol of all the love and everything Fantine put into a man who gave her nothing back. Cosette's character is used merely to show Fantine as she goes through life and through each step as she puts something into someone else, how "miserable" she becomes. As the Thenardier's continue to send Fantine bills for Cosette's deceptive needs, Fantine continues to find ways to get that money.

She goes to every extent to get the money they claim to need for Cosette. Fantine sells everything she has, and when she had nothing she sells herself. She becomes a prostitute as an alternative to earn money. The Thenardier's use Cosette to get money from Fantine as needed. Fantine, being weak and trusting, does not know of their plans and her love for Cosette lets her fall into their scheme. The Thenardier's take in Cosette because Fantine can't take care of her and work at the same time. As Cosette gets older she becomes useful to the Thenardier's.

Her innocent childhood is taken away from her and she is treated like a slave. Cosette is used to clean and work around the house making stockings and other necessary things. Cosette's character and the way she is treated show the Thenardier's authority. The way that the two daughters of the Thenardier's won't play with Cosette reveals the superiority the daughters claim to have over Cosette. Cosette is different; she is small and skinny, for she doesn't get fed as well; she is dirty and her clothes have holes, for she doesn't have the privilege of getting a bath; and she is used as help and treated as a slave.

This shows the boundary that was put up between Cosette and the Thenardier girls. Cosette isn't loved or cared for—only used. Her role plays into the plot of the book; after being beat and tortured by the evil Thenardier's, it's time for Cosette to be saved. Jean Valjean comes just in time to take Cosette away from these awful people. Cosette play an important role in the life of Jean Valjean. After being imprisoned for nineteen years and accused of many other crimes, Jean Valjean can't find it in him to love or trust another human. Cosette changes that for him.

When Jean Valjean first goes to the Thenardier's and notices poor Cosette working away at knitting stockings while the other children play he connects with her. Jean Valjean then buys the stockings she is knitting and gives her permission to play. Cosette is shocked for she is never allowed to play, and Jean Valjean finds joy in watching this little girl content. When Jean Valjean takes Cosette from the Thenardiers, she becomes his “ daughter. ” Jean Valjean grows very attached to Cosette and learns to love and care for her. Cosette is used to show that a man in prison can change.

Jean Valjean changes once Cosette enters his life. His actions become revolved around the safety and happiness of her. Jean Valjean existence is centered on Cosette. As her character is developed with him, Jean Valjean's outgoing love for others is revealed. Having Cosette in Jean Valjean's life, it exposes us to a changed side of him. Through, Cosette, it is showed that a man in prison can become a good man. After adopting Cosette, taking her in, loving and caring for her, Jean Valjean and Cosette's relationship shows what a good man he has become.

Cosette becomes Jean Valjean's entity. He puts everything into her happiness. She symbolizes all he has. When she falls in love with Marius and leaves him, he has nothing. Jean Valjean's reason for living dies and so does he. Cosette's character moves around many times throughout the novel. She spends a portion of the book with her mother, Fantine, who could not take care of her. Cosette becomes the object of Fantine's poverty. Their relationship also exposes us to the theme of the unfulfilled love, since Cosette cannot return Fantine's love at such a young age.

Cosette then goes to the Thenardier's where she presents us to this evil family who beat and abuse her. When Jean Valjean takes her in, Cosette reveals a side of Jean Valjean that has not yet been exposed- his loving side. Jean Valjean loves Cosette and supports and protects her. Cosette is used in many ways throughout the novel and by many different characters. Although she never becomes a well-rounded character, she plays an important role in the development of the other characters. Cosette touches each character she comes in contact with and each in a distinct way.