

LES MISERABLES - Sheet 1

★★★★ What is it all about? ★★★★★

Jean Valjean who has been imprisoned for 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread has finally been released on parole. Valjean immediately steals from a kindly Bishop, but when he is caught he is amazed to find that the Bishop lies to the police and instead of condemning him gives him two valuable candlesticks to help start afresh.

Eight years later, Valjean has broken his parole and is living under an assumed name. He has become very wealthy and owns a factory as well as having becoming mayor. One of the workers in his factory, **Fantine**, is found to have an illegitimate child and she is dismissed by the corrupt factory foreman. Fantine is forced onto the streets and after a fight she is arrested and only the intervention of Valjean prevents her being taken to prison by **Javert**, the policeman. Javert is reminded of a prisoner called Valjean who he has supposedly just re-arrested and as soon as Valjean realises that an innocent man is about to be sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit he confesses that he is in fact the real Valjean. He promises Fantine, who is dying, that he will look after her daughter **Cosette** and as Javert comes to arrest him, he escapes to go and find Cosette who has been looked after by innkeepers who have treated her as virtual slave. Valjean pays the Thénardiens off so that he can take her away.

Valjean and Cosette eventually go to Paris where the streets are dominated by street gangs and they are attacked by the Thénardiens and their gang. Ironically they are rescued by Javert. The Thénardiens' daughter, **Eponine**, who is secretly in love with the student **Marius** agrees to help him find Cosette as he has fallen in love with her. Eponine brings Marius to Cosette and foils an attempt to rob Valjean's house.

Revolution is brewing and Marius asks Eponine to take a letter to Cosette. Eponine is shot and killed on her way back. Valjean comes to find Marius and again meets Javert but lets him go rather than kill him. The students and revolutionaries are all killed in the fighting but Marius is rescued by Valjean who takes him down to hide in the sewers. Valjean runs into Javert and begs him to let him take Marius to hospital. Javert lets him go but ashamed of his own behaviour in the face of Valjean's humanity kills himself. Marius recovers and he and Cosette prepare to marry. The Thénardiens try to blackmail Marius saying that Valjean is a murderer, but Marius realises that the ring they produce as evidence is in fact his own ring and that it was Valjean who saved him from death. Valjean tells Cosette about her mother before he dies, joining all those who have died in the revolution.

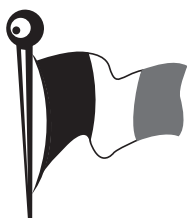
Written by: Bouil & Schönberg

First performed: 1980 in France and 1985 in England

Location: London, England

Theatre: Palace Theatre

First run: Still running today!



Fact: Les Misérables is based on a book by the French author Victor Hugo. The novel is about student riots during the funeral of a French General in 1832 and also an incident when Hugo came to the aid of a young woman who had been wrongly accused.

Les Misérables

LES MISERABLES - Sheet 2

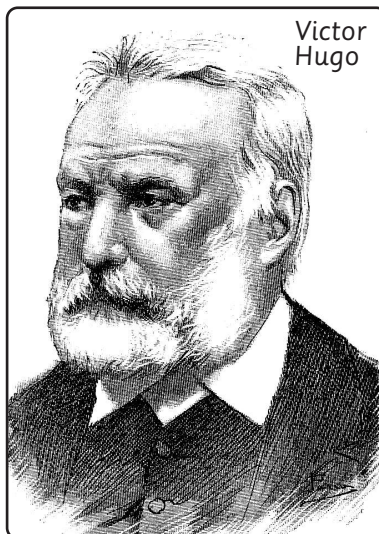
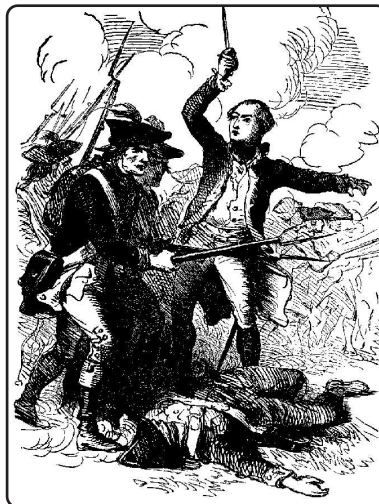
★★★★★ Listen to... ★★★★★

Empty Chairs at Empty Tables

This sad and reflective song, sung by **Marius**, is where he tells of his friends who have died on the barricades. The music starts very gently with the strings and harp, building to a climax as Marius tells of how they wanted to build a new world. It fades away as he tells of how their words of revolution became their last communion as they died. In the song Marius feels haunted by his dead friends and feels guilty that he has survived.

I Dreamed a Dream

This song is sung by the doomed **Fantine**. It starts with an oboe introduction accompanied by the strings. She sings of how she fell in love and imagined it would be forever only to find herself alone and abandoned. The opening of the song is largely sung on one note, as the character speaks of a time when things were different. With the strings and harp providing an accompaniment Fantine sings **I dreamed a dream** and tells of when she was happy. The music changes key with the line **but the tigers come at night** and takes on an air of menace as she sings how her dream was turned to shame. A brief respite comes as she tells us of her lover, before the music climaxes with her dreaming that he will return, whilst knowing that it can't happen. The orchestra builds and the brass section join in before the music eventually fades away.



Victor Hugo

★★★★★★★★★ Things to do... ★★★★★★★★★★

Take one of the main characters from Les Misérables; Jean Valjean, Cosette, Marius, Eponine or Fantine. Try to listen to the songs that they sing. How does the music support the character? Remember Les Misérables has no spoken dialogue so everything we know about the characters

comes from the music and the lyrics. Write a paragraph discussing how the music helps you to understand the character. What instruments are used? What do you like or dislike about the music? How does the composer and lyricist try to make you feel about the character in question?

Les Misérables

OLIVER! - Sheet 1

★ ★ ★ What is it all about? ★ ★ ★

Oliver! is based on the classic story **Oliver Twist** by **Charles Dickens**. It tells the story of the orphan Oliver, who after being abused and mistreated at the workhouse and then by a firm of undertakers, runs away "to make his fortune" in London.

Once arriving in London, he bumps into **The Artful Dodger** who is the first friendly face he sees. The Artful Dodger offers Oliver some accommodation with a certain kindly gentleman that he knows. As we find out later, this gentleman and his gang of boys are actually a pickpocket firm, led by **Fagin**, the elderly rogue himself. Fagin and the boys teach the innocent Oliver how to pick pockets. Oliver goes on a job with the Dodger without realising what they are going to do, and gets caught after the Dodger picks someone's pocket!

Oliver is found guilty by the judge but luckily he is befriended by the victim of the crime, **Mr. Brownlow**. Meanwhile the evil **Bill Sykes**, who works with Fagin, is furious that Oliver has been caught and frightened that he will say something about the gang and decides that

they have to get Oliver back. Mr. Brownlow however takes Oliver into his home and looks after him and all looks as if Oliver will be able to live a happy and normal life. Sykes sends along his girlfriend **Nancy** to kidnap Oliver who realises afterwards that Sykes means to kill the boy. She decides that she must go to Mr. Brownlow and confess so that Oliver can be rescued from death. She arranges to take Oliver back to Mr. Brownlow but Sykes finds out about the plan and in the ensuing action Nancy is brutally murdered by Sykes.

With the police chasing him across the rooftops Sykes tries to make his escape but after climbing up onto the roof of a house he falls to his death.

Oliver is reunited with Mr. Brownlow and it is discovered that Oliver is actually the son of Mr. Brownlow's daughter! The story ends happily for Oliver with him going to live with Mr. Brownlow in his fine home.

Fagin decides it is time to move on and the show ends with him leaving London to start a new life somewhere else!

Written by: Lionel Bart

First performed: 1960

Location: West End, London

Theatre: New Theatre

First run: 2,618 performances

Fact: Lionel Bart has won more Ivor Novello Music Awards for songwriting than anyone else despite the fact that he couldn't read or write music or play an instrument well.

OLIVER!



OLIVER! - Sheet 2

★★★★ Listen to... ★★★★★

Reviewing The Situation

This song is sung by **Fagin** at the very end of the show when he realises that he is going to have to get out of town after all the events involving **Sykes** and **Oliver**.

It starts with a dramatic orchestral introduction before Fagin comes in singing the first verse with the line **A man's got a heart hasn't he? A man's got to live hasn't he?** accompanied by the strings with a gentle and mournful violin solo. When he sings the chorus **I'm reviewing the situation** the music speeds up and becomes lighter. The slower almost spoken verses contrast with the rousing chorus which gradually accelerates through to a final chord each time

As Long As He Needs Me

This is sung by **Nancy**, the girlfriend of **Bill Sykes**. She sings that as long as he needs her she will be there for him. Despite the fact that Sykes treats her badly she cannot bring herself to leave him. She sings of how she misses him when he isn't around and of how she tries not to show him how much she cares. All the words are made more poignant as we see how he treats her badly and know that ultimately he will kill her.

The song is accompanied by the string section of the orchestra with a the woodwind playing a solo line. The song is mostly quite gentle but builds to a fortissimo climax as Nancy finishes the song.

Consider Yourself!

This song is sung by the **Artful Dodger**, **Oliver** and the people in the street scene. In the scene Oliver meets Dodger not long after he has arrived in London and the extrovert character of Dodger is perfectly summed up in this energetic song.

The brass section of the orchestra play a rousing introduction before Dodger starts singing. He is then accompanied by the strings and woodwind. The brass section joins back in when Oliver and Dodger sing together and the song gradually builds up as more and more people join in. This song contains one of the major dance sequences in the show culminating in everyone on stage singing and dancing together.

★★ Things to do... ★★

Imagine you had to write the programme notes for a production of Oliver! Include details about the composer as well as the musical itself. If possible watch a video of Oliver! How does the music and the words encourage the audience to feel sympathetic towards the character of Oliver?



ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

★★★★★ Who is he? ★★★★★

Andrew Lloyd Webber was born in 1948. His father was a professor at the **Royal College of Music** and his mother was also a music teacher, while his brother is an accomplished cellist. He is one of the most well-known composers of modern musicals with many hits including **Jesus Christ Superstar**, **Evita**, **Phantom of the Opera** and **Cats**.

Andrew Lloyd Webber has also written music scores for the films **Gumshoe** and **The Odessa File**. His first success came working with **Tim Rice** on the pop cantata turned musical **Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat** in the late 1960's.

Since then he has won many awards including seven **Tony Awards**, four **Drama Desk Awards**, three **Grammys**, five **Laurence Olivier Awards** and an **Oscar**!

The longest running musical in the West End is **Cats** which was written by Lloyd Webber in 1981. In 1992 he was awarded a knighthood for his contribution to the arts and in 1997 he was made **The Lord Lloyd Webber of Sydmonton**.

Andrew Lloyd Webber's company which stages

his shows is called **The Really Useful Theatre Company**. This is part of **The Really Useful Group** which also includes music publishing, recording, film and magazine branches. **Really Useful Theatres** is the West End's largest proprietor of theatres from the London Palladium to the Theatre Royal in Dury Lane.

His latest musical is called **The Beautiful Game** and was co-written with the popular comedian and writer **Ben Elton**. It is set in the 1960's and tells the story of a group of teenagers, two of whom are talented footballers. It won the **Best Musical Award** in the Critics' Circle Theatre Awards in 2000.



JESUS CHRIST
SUPERSTAR



★★★★★ Things to do... ★★★★★

Choose one Andrew Lloyd Webber musical to look at in more depth. See if you can find out the details of when and where it was first performed, if it is still running, and if it is details of the current run. Discover who first starred in it and outline the storyline.

Imagine you had to write the programme notes for the musical you have chosen. What details would be good to include to help the audience understand the show better?

Finally, what do you think is the key to Andrew Lloyd Webber's success in musical theatre?