



**The American French Film Festival a Week of Premieres in Hollywood  
ELMA  
The American Association of French Teachers of Southern California**

## **Class Activities**

# **Le Comte de Monte Cristo**



The document was put together by Laurence Denié-Higney, UCLA. The activities were created by Marie-Magdeleine Chirol, Whittier College and Laurence Denié-Higney, UCLA.

## Information on *le Comte de Monte Cristo*

<b>Directors</b>	Alexandre de la Patellière et Matthieu Delaporte
<b>Screenplay</b>	Matthieu Delaporte et Alexandre de la Patellière d'après <i>Le Comte de Monte Cristo</i> d'Alexandre Dumas
<b>Music</b>	Jérôme Rebotier
<b>Production</b>	Dimitri Rassam
<b>Distribution Company</b>	Pathé

### Main Characters:

<b>Characters</b>	<b>Actor</b>
Edmond Dantès / Comte de Monte Cristo	Pierre Niney
Mercédès Herrera	Anaïs Desmoustier
Fernand de Morcef	Bastien Bouillon
Gérard de Villefort	Laurent Lafitte
Baron Danglars	Patrick Mille
Victoria Danglars	Julie de Bona
l'Abbé Faria	Pierfrancesco Favino
Haydée (protégée du Comte)	Anamaria Vartolomei
Albert de Morcef	Vassili Schneider
André de Villefort / Prince Andrea Cavalcanti	Julien de Saint Jean
Eugénie Danglars	Marie Narbonne

## Before the screening of the movie



Watch the movie trailer [▶ The Count of Monte-Cristo : Official Trailer in 4K](#) and answer the following questions.

After watching the trail, what seems to me the main theme of the movie?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Love & Hate           | <input type="checkbox"/> Revenge & Forgiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Justice vs Injustice  | <input type="checkbox"/> Life & Death          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty vs Corruption | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty & Treason     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pauvreté vs Richness  | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth & Old age       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Destiny & Luck        | <input type="checkbox"/> Water & Fire          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joy and Pain          | <input type="checkbox"/> Light & Shadow        |

**Pick three of the themes and explain your choice using the images of the trailer.**

1/ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2/ \_\_\_\_\_

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3/ \_\_\_\_\_

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**Pick all the objects you can see in the picture below.**



- |                                       |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a candle     | <input type="checkbox"/> oils         | <input type="checkbox"/> perfume             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a hair brush | <input type="checkbox"/> a mask       | <input type="checkbox"/> a comb              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scissors     | <input type="checkbox"/> a medal      | <input type="checkbox"/> make-up brushes     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pencils      | <input type="checkbox"/> miroirs      | <input type="checkbox"/> powders             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lotions      | <input type="checkbox"/> handkerchief | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ (your choice) |

**What is the significance of these objects ? Which theme(s) are they connected to?**

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**According to you, who owns these objects ? Why?**

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# After the screening of the movie

## Themes:

Now that you have seen the movie, which theme seems to be the most important?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Love & Hate           | <input type="checkbox"/> Revenge & Forgiveness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Justice vs Injustice  | <input type="checkbox"/> Life & Death          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honesty vs Corruption | <input type="checkbox"/> Loyalty & Treason     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poverty vs Richness   | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth & Old age       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Destiny & Luck        | <input type="checkbox"/> Water & Fire          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joy and Pain          | <input type="checkbox"/> Light & Shadow        |

Did you choose the same theme after seeing the movie? Why, why not? Explain your choice using scenes from the movie.

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With a partner, discuss a scene in the movie that is the most significant for you: is this scene at the beginning, middle or the end of the movie? Who are the characters? What is happening? Why did you choose this scene?

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## Characters:

Choose a character from the movie that you find interesting. Explain your choice: do you like / dislike this character? Can you relate to the struggles or feelings of this character? On the contrary, do you condemn this character?

## SCENE ANALYSIS

**Analyze the scene below between the Count of Monte Cristo and Mercédès, Countess of Morcef.** Use the selection of shots and dialogues below in your analysis.

Analysis prompts: When does this scene take place? Why is this scene important? What makes the meeting place interesting? Who are the characters, and what are they talking about? Discuss the underlying meanings or unspoken elements. What is the atmosphere like? How does the mise en scène (camera angles, lighting, colors, etc.) contribute to the development of the reunion? How does the meeting end?

Plans / *Shots*    M = Mercédès    C = Le Comte de Monte Cristo / *The Count of Monte Cristo*

1.



2.



3.



**M:** Mais enfin, nous sommes amis, n'est-ce pas? / *But we are friends, aren't we?*

**C:** Certainement. Pourquoi ne le serions-nous pas? / *Certainly. Why wouldn't we be?*

4.



**M:** Alors à défaut de pain et de sel, peut-être accepterez-vous de partager avec moi quelques-uns de vos souvenirs? / *Then in lieu of bread and salt, perhaps you will share some memories?*

**C:** Que désirez-vous savoir Madame? / *What would you like to know?*



5.



**M:** Est-il vrai que vous ayez tant vu, tant voyagé, tant souffert? / *Is it true you've seen so much, traveled, and suffered so much?*

**C:** Qu'est-ce qui vous fait dire ça? / *What makes you say that?*

**M:** Vos yeux / *Your eyes.*

**C:** On dit qu'il y a en chaque voyageur l'envie de trouver ou de fuir quelque chose [...]. / *They say travelers are either seeking or fleeing something. [...]*

6.



**M:** Vous vivez seul? / *Do you live alone?*

**C:** Je n'ai ni sœur, ni fils, ni père. [...]. / *I have no sister, no son, no father. [...]*

7.



**M:** Comment pouvez-vous vivre ainsi, sans rien qui vous rattache à la vie? / *How can you live like that? Nothing to bind you to life?*

**C:** J'ai aimé une jeune femme que j'allais épouser, il y a des années. / *I loved a young woman. I was to marry her. Years ago.*

8.



**C:** [...] j'ai cru qu'elle m'aimerait assez pour m'attendre [...]. Mais quand je suis revenu, elle était mariée. / *[...] I thought she'd love me enough to wait. [...] When I returned, she was married.*

9.



**M:** Et cet amour vous est resté au cœur? / *And you kept that love in your heart?*

10.



**C:** On n'aime vraiment qu'une fois. Non? / *You only really love once. Right?*



11.



**M:** Avez-vous revu cette femme? / *Have you seen her again?*

12.



**C:** Jamais / *Never.* **M:** Jamais? / *Never?*  
**C:** Jamais. / *Never*

13.



**M:** Lui avez-vous pardonné ce qu'elle vous a fait souffrir? / *Have you forgiven her for what you suffered?*

14.



**C:** On ne peut pardonner que ceux qui nous demandent pardon / *One can only forgive those who ask forgiveness.*

15.



**M:** Et si elle vous demandait pardon aujourd'hui? / *What if she asked forgiveness now?*

16.



[bruit de verre cassé provenant de la salle de réception / *sound of broken glass coming from the reception hall*]

17.



18.



## SCENE ANALYSIS (example)

Multiple analyses of the scene are possible. Here is an example.

This scene takes place at the end of the sequence during the birthday party organized by Baron Danglars for his daughter Eugénie's twentieth birthday (2:02:55-2:10:04). At the beginning of the sequence, André arrives at the Danglars'. Soon after, he is followed by the Count of Monte Cristo with Haydée on his arm. Albert comes to Haydée while Mercédès de Morcef joins the Count of Monte Cristo. She asks him to take a few steps together. They leave the guests dancing in the reception hall and head to an adjacent salon. Mercédès offers wine and food to the Count but he declines. Saddened, Mercedes heads for a last room further back. The Count follows her. The scene to be analyzed begins when Mercédès enters a small living room/salon overlooking an inner courtyard (2:06:42).

### ***Importance of the Scene***

If the Count and Mercedes have already met at a previous reception, this is the first time that they meet out of sight, free to express themselves in all honesty. Although expected, this encounter will remain a parenthesis during which unspoken words and innuendos only echo the poetry of a setting rich in vegetation. This scene does not lead to any agreement or reconciliation. On the other hand, it seems to strengthen the Count's determination to make his enemies pay the price of a love he thought was eternal, but which turned out to be ephemeral, like this short reunion with no real consequence or reversal of situation.

### ***Composition and Set Design***

Designed like a five-act play, the scene begins when Mercédès followed by the Count enter the salon and ends when the young woman leaves under the Count's gaze. The meeting is placed under the sign of friendship (1st line of Mercedes, Shot 3), for lack of love. The scene is built in several stages following the rhythm of Mercedes' questions:

1. Introduction / Exposition
  - Characters' entrance
    - "But we are friends, aren't we?"* (Shot 3)
2. Development around five questions
  - a. *"Is it true you've seen so much, traveled, and suffered so much?"* (Shot 5)
  - b. *"Do you live alone?"* (Shot 6)
  - c. *"And you kept that love in your heart?"* (Shot 9)
  - d. *"Have you seen her [this woman] again?"* (Shot 11)
  - e. *"Have you forgiven her for what you suffered?"* (Shot 13)
3. Conclusion
  - "What if she asked forgiveness now?"* (Shot 15) [sound of glass breaking]
  - Mercedes leaves in a hurry under the Count's gaze (Shot 18)

The scene is also theatrical because of the *mise en scène*: arrival and exit through the same entrance (Shots 2 and 17), salon/living room as long as a theater stage, sofa in the middle of the stage with its back to an inner courtyard, well-arranged green setting.

The salon, the last setting seen at the Danglars' house and the culmination of the sequence, is a true haven of greenery away from the noise of the party. The lighting is natural, conducive to confidence and openness to others. The green foliage of the plants forms curves in this seemingly idyllic place for a reunion (Shots 2, 7, 17). In the first interior shot of the salon, Mercedes appears in what looks like a globe of greenery, framed by two marble pillars with curved lines, due to the distorting effect caused by a wide-angle lens and the shade of the plants (Shot 2). The windows behind the sofa contribute to the impression that the characters are in a greenhouse – the windows can evoke a desire for transparency and openness, but they also suggest a fragile bubble.

### *Characters and Dialogues*

Although the dialogues are clear and direct (each question has an answer), Mercédès and the Count claim not to have recognized each other. The whole scene evolves between unspoken words and innuendos, insistent gazes and averted looks (Shots 7-16), questions leading to other questions (Shot 3) and repetitions (C: Never. M: Never? C: Never - Shot 12).

The dialogues are calm and composed, as if to let no emotion show. The shots alternate between Mercédès and the Count, creating tension. When they are sitting on the sofa, the camera is at an angle, much like the slightly offbeat conversation in the face of a reality that neither character wants to confront.

When the Count evokes the woman he loved and was to marry, the shots change and the camera, still at an angle, is placed this time behind the characters, offering a different point of view (Shot 8-11). This change of point of view, which begins with the Count's line, clearly marks a break in the flow of innuendos: "I thought she'd love me enough to wait" seems to become, in the ears of Mercedes and the viewer, "I thought you'd love me enough to wait" (Shot 8). In addition, the line "You only really love once. Right?" (Shot 10), addressed to Mercedes and left unanswered, seems a direct, sincere, even accusatory statement, rather than a real question.

Mercedes' last question "What if she asked forgiveness now?" remains unanswered, while the sound of broken glass interrupts the conversation. Mercedes gets up hastily and leaves the room as if she feared to hear the Count's reply. Otherwise, not being the hostess of the reception, why would she leave so quickly?

The Count's story of revenge can resume its course after this brief parenthesis during which everything could still change but which lasted only for the duration of a scene. The Count's gaze, both dark and icy, leaves no ambiguity about his intentions (Shot 18).