

## Teacher's notes

# The Three Musketeers

by Alexandre Dumas



## SUMMARY

**W**hen the young d'Artagnan travels to Paris, he carries with him a letter for Captain de Treville of the King's musketeers. Despite getting into a fight on the way, he arrives at the Captain's house and there meets the three men who are to become his firm friends, Athos, Porthos and Aramis, the three musketeers of the title. But before their friendship can be confirmed, they each challenge him to a duel.

Fortunately perhaps, before any of the duels can take place, the four musketeers are faced with men from the Cardinal's guard and there is a fight which the musketeers win.

When the King hears about the fight, he makes d'Artagnan one of the King's guards, though not yet a musketeer.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Richelieu is plotting to trap the Queen and ensure that the King has proof of her infidelity with the English Duke of Buckingham. She has foolishly given one of the King's presents to her, twelve diamond pins, to the Duke as a sign of her affection. The Cardinal has arranged for Milady de Winter to steal two of the pins. Thus, when the Queen tries to get the pins back in time for a dinner and dance at which she must wear them, Richelieu is sure that she will only have 10 not 12. But d'Artagnan and the Duke foil the plans by having two replacement pins made in time for the dinner.

The action moves on to the wider stage of civil war. The King and the Cardinal are desperate to take the Huguenot stronghold of La Rochelle and, with the help of the four friends, the stronghold is taken. D'Artagnan is summoned into the Cardinal's presence and goes, fearing for his life. He returns to his friends with a piece of paper, making him a lieutenant in the musketeers.

## ABOUT ALEXANDRE DUMAS

Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870) is probably the most widely read of all French writers, best known perhaps for *The Three Musketeers* with *The Count of Monte Cristo* a close second. Astonishingly, these two world famous books were both written in the same year, 1844, and translated into English two years later.

Dumas was born in France but his grandfather was a French nobleman who had emigrated to Santo Domingo (now the Dominican Republic) where he had married a black woman. As a child he loved adventure stories and this love came through later in his own writing.

He first became famous in literary circles with his play *Henry III and His Court* which was first performed in 1829 to acclaim. He went on to write over 1200 books, although it must be said that many of these were the result of his writing factory, where writing apprentices worked to flesh out his ideas. Nevertheless, nearly all are clearly the result of his imagination and sense of storyline.

Dumas made a huge amount of money during his life but spent it all, on a country estate which he called Monte Cristo, on mistresses and on less successful businesses than writing.

## BACKGROUND AND THEMES

The period in which this novel is set was a particularly turbulent one for France, full of political intrigue. Louis XIII had been on the throne for many years, but during his minority, from 1610 to 1617, his mother Marie de Médicis had served as regent and became extremely powerful. She allied France with Hapsburg Spain and arranged the marriage in 1615 of Louis to Princess Anne of Austria, daughter of Philip III, king of Spain. She also arranged for Cardinal Richelieu to become one of Louis' ministers, and eventually his prime minister. He became even more powerful when the Queen Mother unsuccessfully tried to have him removed from power in 1630.

Richelieu played a complicated game. In order to minimize the power of the Hapsburgs who ruled most of Europe, he took Catholic France into the Thirty Years' War on the side of Protestant Sweden. Yet he also fought against the Protestant Huguenots inside France, in particular besieging their stronghold of La Rochelle. It had been unsuccessfully besieged before but after a 14 month siege, it finally fell to Cardinal Richelieu in 1628 despite the efforts of the English Duke of Buckingham to relieve the stronghold.

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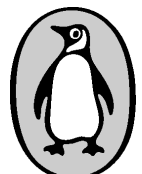
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## Teacher's notes

## Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

## ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- 1 Ask students if they have ever read the story or seen a film of the story. If any student has, ask them what they remember.
- 2 Tell students that the musketeers are fond of the saying: 'All for one and one for all.' Ask them to translate the expression and/or explain it in other words.

## ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

## Chapters 1–4

- 1 Ask students to work in pairs to role play a scene in which d'Artagnan is challenged to a fight. D'Artagnan does something which makes the other person angry and after a number of insults from one to the other, the two men arrange a time and a place for the fight.
- 2 Put students into small groups to stage the fight in Chapter 4 – from the bottom of page 10. There should be the friends on one side, Cahusac, Bicarat, de Jussac and two other guards on the other side. There should also be a narrator, who describes the different parts of the fight.

## Chapters 5–9

- 1 Remind students that the Queen with the musketeers manages to spoil the Cardinal's plan. Ask students to work in groups. One person in each group is the Cardinal and the others are advisors. Together each group must think of another plan to trap the Queen so that the King finds out that she loves the Duke of Buckingham.
- 2 Ask each of the groups to explain their ideas to the rest of the class. Then put the students back in groups. Tell them that this time they are musketeers. They have overheard the plans (from Exercise 1) and they must think of a way to prevent each one.  
Elicit ideas from the groups and choose the best one in each case.

## Chapter 10–13

- 1 What is going to happen to each of the three musketeers? Ask students to work in groups of three and to role-play a scene in which Athos, Porthos and Aramis meet again after 20 years. They tell each other what they have done in the meantime.
- 2 Ask students to work in pairs and explain how each of these words is important in this part of the story.

## Chapter 10

innkeeper  
fireplace  
ship

permit

## Chapter 11

breakfast  
bastion  
dead men

## Chapter 12

brother  
a piece of paper

## ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Ask students to work in groups. Each group must find five sentences in the book said by one of the main characters. Each sentence must be an important one from the story e.g. not just 'Yes, I am'. When each group has the five sentences, they tell them to the other groups. The other groups get one point for identifying the character that said them all, and two points each for explaining when/why the character said each sentence.

## Glossary

*It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)*

## Chapters 1–4

**army** (n) the part of a country's military force that is trained to fight on land

**attack** (n) a violent action that is intended to harm someone or something

**captain** (n) someone who is in charge of a ship or plane; a military rank

**cardinal** (n) a priest who has a high rank in the Roman Catholic church

**carriage** (n) a vehicle with wheels that is pulled by a horse

**duke** (n) a man with the highest social rank below a prince

**guard** (n) someone whose job is to protect a person or a place

**handkerchief** (n) a small piece of cloth or paper used for drying your nose or eyes

**inn** (n) a small hotel, especially one in the countryside

**innkeeper** (n) a person who keeps or manages an inn

**king** (n) the male ruler of a country

**musketeer** (n) a soldier in olden times who carried a musket

**piece** (n) a part of something that has been separated or broken off from the rest of it

**sword** (n) a weapon with a long sharp blade and a handle

## Chapters 5–9

**diamond** (n) a very valuable clear hard stone used in jewellery

**permit** (n) an official written statement allowing you to do something

**pin** (n) a piece of jewellery that pins or attaches to clothing

**queen** (n) the female ruler of a country



## Student's activities

### Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

### Activities before reading the book

Read the Introduction.

- Who are the main characters in the story?
- Who were these people?
  - Alexandre Dumas
  - Louis XIII
  - Cardinal Richelieu
  - the Duke of Buckingham
  - Musketeers

### Activities while reading the book

#### Chapters 1-4

- Match each name (a-e) from Chapter 1 with one of the descriptions (i-v),
  - d'Artagnan
  - de Treville
  - Tarbes
  - Gascony
  - Milady
  - a part of France
  - an important English woman
  - captain of the King's musketeers
  - d'Artagnan's home town
  - the main character in the story
- Put this conversation in order. Then practise the conversation in pairs.
 

Man: Go back to England now. When the duke leaves London, tell the Cardinal.

Man: I'm going back to Paris.

Man: Open this box when you get to England.

Man: You are right, Milady. We cannot wait.

Woman: All right. And what do you have to do?

Woman: Remember the Cardinal's words!

Woman: Is that all?

Woman: So what does the Cardinal say?
- Are these sentences from Chapter 2 true or false?
  - The musketeers were guards for the King of France.

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- The Cardinal's men often fought the King's men.
  - De Treville did not want to see d'Artagnan.
  - The musketeers won the fight with the Cardinal's men.
  - Athos died in the fight.
  - It is easy to join the musketeers.
- 4 Read the information about the first fight (Chapter 3). Complete the table about the other fights.

Fight	Who with?	What time?	Where?	Reason for the fight
1	Athos	about midday	behind the church	he ran into Athos
2				
3				

#### Chapters 5-9

- Who likes / loves / hates who? Work in pairs. Talk about these people. Take your information from Chapter 5.
 

D'Artagnan	Aramis	The King
Athos	The Cardinal	The Duke of Buckingham
Porthos	The Queen	Constance Bonacieux
- What happened in Chapter 6 to these people?
  - Porthos
  - Aramis
  - Athos
  - D'Artagnan's horse
  - Comte de Wardes
  - D'Artagnan in Dover
  - D'Artagnan in London
- Complete these sentences about the information in Chapter 7. Use one word from the box in each case.
 

box diamonds dinner horse house letter man pins ship something

  - D'Artagnan gave the Queen's ... to the Duke.

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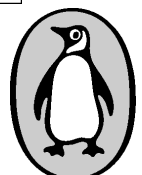
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## Student's activities

- (b) The Duke read the letter and went to a ... .
- (c) 'These are the Queen's ... .' he said.
- (d) But two of the ... were missing.
- (e) 'Lady de Winter saw the diamonds at ... . She has two of them now.'
- (f) 'I must do ... .'
- (g) So the Duke paid a ... and he made two more pins.
- (h) D'Artagnan went back on a ... to a small French town.
- (i) He found a fine ... there.
- (j) He arrived in Paris and slept at de Treville's ....
- 4 Who in Chapter 8 was/looked ... ?
- (a) excited
- (b) great and rich
- (c) not happy at first
- (d) sad or tired at first
- (e) happy at first
- (f) very angry
- (g) very beautiful
- (h) angry and afraid
- (i) very, very angry
- 5 These sentences from Chapter 9 are not true. Correct them.
- (a) Porthos caught his foot on something and hurt his leg when he fell.
- (b) Aramis left the musketeers to be a man of the Church.
- (c) Athos had a friend who was married to Lady de Winter.

## Chapters 10–13

- 1 Who, in Chapter 10 ...
- (a) ... had the city of La Rochelle?
- (b) ... wanted to get the city back?
- (c) ... did the musketeers meet on the road?
- (d) ... was at the inn?
- (e) ... listened to the conversation between the Cardinal and Milady?
- (f) ... did the Cardinal want Milady to go and see?
- (g) ... did Milady want to die?
- (h) ... went with the Cardinal when he left the inn?
- (i) ... wrote a permit for Milady?

- 2 Put in order these events from Chapters 11 and 12.
- (a) About 25 men came from La Rochelle to the bastion but the musketeers fought well and ten men died.
- (b) The four friends took their breakfast to the bastion.
- (c) The four friends put muskets in the hands of the dead men.
- (d) The four friends got the muskets and the musket balls from the dead men.
- (e) Athos said to de Busigny 'I and my three friends are going to have breakfast in the St Gervais bastion and stay there for one hour.'
- (f) De Busigny said to Athos 'You cannot do it.'
- (g) The four friends had breakfast at the bastion.
- (h) Athos, Porthos, Aramis and d'Artagnan walked back to their army.
- (i) About twenty men including some workmen came to the bastion but the four friends took up the muskets and three of the attackers fell dead.
- (j) The workmen ran back to the town.
- (k) The other men started to climb up the bastion but the four friends pushed the wall down.
- 3 Discuss these questions about the end of the story in pairs.
- (a) What happened to Lady de Winter? Why?
- (b) What happened to d'Artagnan? Why? (There are several possible reasons!)
- (c) Why wouldn't the other musketeers take the paper from d'Artagnan?

## Activities after reading the book

Work in pairs. Look at the chapter titles in the table of contents. Try to summarise the events in each chapter.

