

# The Last Count of Monte Cristo

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Mid to Upper Secondary



## SYNOPSIS

*The Last Count of Monte Cristo* is a bold retelling of Alexandre Dumas's tale of love, betrayal, revenge and redemption. This speculative update pushes the narrative into a future hundreds of years after the polar ice caps have melted and submerged our planet into a new era of technology and culture. When the young sailor Dantes is framed for a crime he didn't commit, he is thrown into prison without any hope of release. However, with the help of a cunning fellow convict, Dantes plans not only a daring escape, but also a grand scheme of retribution against those who wronged him.

For Dantes to reclaim his future, he will have to leave his old identity behind and embrace his new persona, the Count of Monte Cristo. His epic journey spans oceans and continents, showcasing the incredible world-building and storytelling from author Ayize Jama-Everett and illustrator Tristan Roach.

A radical and powerful graphic novel update, *The Last Count of Monte Cristo* reclaims the cultural heritage of Dumas's tale and suggests the terrible future that could threaten the human race if we continue to destroy our planet.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ayize Jama-Everett has travelled extensively in Africa, New Hampshire, Northern California and Mexico. He holds master's degrees in clinical psychology, divinity and creative writing. He has taught at the Graduate Theological Union and California College of the Arts and was a school therapist for ten years in Oakland. Jama-Everett believes the narratives of our times dictate the realities of the future, so he's invested in imbuing his work with subversive notions like family of choice, striving when not chosen to survive and irrational optimism. He lives in Harlem, New York.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Tristan Roach is based in Barbados and holds a BFA in graphic design. He is the owner and creative director at the multimedia studio BounceHouse Creative Studio, which uses mediums such as graphic design, animation and illustration. Roach is one of the founding members of Beyond Publishing Caribbean and has worked on multiple indie titles and his own, including *Spirit Bear*. His work in comics has earned him a Gold Angel Award, among others.

## STUDY NOTES

### BEFORE READING

- Consider the front cover and answer the following questions:
  - What does the front cover tell us about the graphic novel?

- What expectations do the students have about what the story will be about?
- What era is it set in?
- What genre is it?
- *The Last Count of Monte Cristo* is based on a novel by Alexandre Dumas called *The Count of Monte Cristo* which was originally published in 1844 and has been adapted multiple times. Consider other adaptations you have read/seen (such as *Romeo and Juliet* by Shakespeare, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens).
  - What stays the same? What changes?
  - Why do we adapt/modernise stories?
  - What happens when we change the context of the story?
- What impact does the addition of the word 'last' in the title have?

## AFTER READING

- Why do the following characters betray The Last Count of Monte Cristo?
    - Villefort
    - Chamil de Morcef
    - Danglars.
  - What is the Monte Cristo? Provide a quote from the text.
  - 'Your sharpest weapons reside between your breast your breasts and your ears. I promise, I am well-armed.' What does The Count of Monte Cristo mean?
  - How does The Count of Monte Cristo use nature to exact his revenge? Provide examples from the text.
  - *The Count of Monte Cristo* is an adventure tale of revenge. At the beginning of the graphic novel, the Count says 'We must always have room for revenge. Without that, we are no longer human.' How and why does the Count's attitude towards revenge change over the course of the graphic novel? Provide examples from the text.
    - The character Haydee has a revenge story of her own. Why is she seeking revenge?
  - Consider the character of Mufti Hajim and answer the following questions:
    - What is his role in the graphic novel?
    - What are his philosophies on the world?
    - What does he believe in?
  - Quabbinah Dantes transforms himself into many different things: Sinbad the Sailor, The Last Count of Monte Cristo, Imam Alforni. What are the advantages of this? What are the disadvantages?
  - Divide the students into small groups and ask them to consider the following definition
    - providence  
*noun*
      1. (often initial capital letter) the foreseeing care and guidance of God or nature over the creatures of the earth.
      2. (initial capital letter) God, especially when conceived as omnisciently directing the universe and the affairs of humankind with wise benevolence.
- Source: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/providence>
- Have the students discuss the presence of God in the graphic novel.
  - Students are to agree in their groups, what role God played in the Count's story and present their viewpoint to the wider group.
  - Watch the following Ted Talk Imagining a SolarPunk Future then discuss the below questions: <[https://www.ted.com/talks/keisha\\_howard\\_imagining\\_a\\_solarpunk\\_future](https://www.ted.com/talks/keisha_howard_imagining_a_solarpunk_future)>
    - What is solar punk?
    - What is the difference between cyberpunk and solar punk?
    - What is meant by Fredic Jameson's quote: 'Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism'.
      - How does this relate to cyberpunk and solar punk?
    - Break the students into smaller groups. Have the students find examples of solar punk in the graphic novel and present their findings to the class.

- Create your own vision of a solar punk future. Students are to create a single annotated image depicting their contribution to a solar punk future. They can select an existing monument, building, piece of transport, structure, piece of clothing or city or create something completely new. Annotations should include:
  - a description of your selected monument, building, piece of transport, structure or city
  - what adaptations or features you have added to make it solar punk
  - labels for adaptations/features
  - an explanation of the benefits these adaptations/features.
- Ask students to select a classic story they are familiar with. They must first identify the following in the classic story:
  - What is main plot? What are the main plot points?
  - Who are the characters?
  - What is the setting?
  - What message is the story trying to get across?
  - What are the themes?
- Once they have answered the above questions, they should create an outline or project plan for how they will retell the story. The plan can be for a film, graphic novel, play, video game or novel. The plan must demonstrate an understanding of how the choices they have made, enhance the story. Students may wish to use visuals in this project to demonstrate worldbuilding. The plan must include:
  - Which characters they included
    - how they have been modified for the retelling
    - why they have been modified in this way
  - Main plot points
  - A description of the setting
  - A description of the themes explored.