

BEFORE READING

1 **Napoleon is an important person in the story *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Complete this information about him with the words in the box. Use a dictionary to help you.**

Napoleon Bonaparte was born in 1769 in Corsica. He agreed with the French Revolution of 1789, and the

(a) of King Louis XVI.

In 1804 Napoleon became (b) of France and by 1807 France had a large Empire in Europe.

But then Napoleon became unpopular. In 1812 he sent his

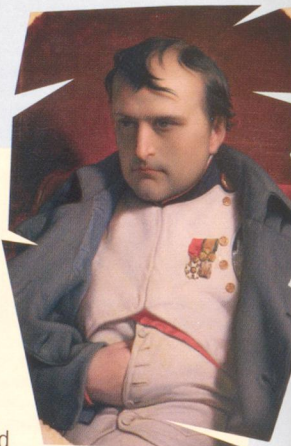
(c) into Russia, where the hard winter killed many of his soldiers. In 1814 he lost the (d)

of Leipzig and was sent away to the island of Elba in the Mediterranean.

After that, the (e) in France made Louis XVI's brother, Louis XVIII, the new king of France. (Louis XVI's son, Louis XVII, had died as a boy in prison.)

Early in 1815 Napoleon (f) from Elba and returned to France. The French army welcomed him as the Emperor of France and Louis XVIII left Paris.

Later Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo. He was (g) to the island of Saint Helena in the south Atlantic and Louis XVIII returned to Paris. Napoleon died on Saint Helena six years later.



army
banished
battle
Emperor
escaped
execution
royalists

2 **This story begins in 1815. Do these people from the story support the King, or Napoleon, or both? Write your answer.**

- a Monsieur Villefort, the crown prosecutor
- b Renée Saint-Méran, the daughter of a rich, old family
- c Monsieur Noirtier, an old soldier

A wicked plan

On February 24th 1815, a ship called the *Pharaon* sailed into Marseille, the largest port in the south of France. People ran to the waterside to welcome it, because the arrival of a ship is always a great excitement in Marseille, especially if it belongs to an owner from the town. A young man was standing on the deck, watching the sails and giving careful orders to the sailors. He was between eighteen and twenty years old, tall, with fine dark eyes and fair hair. His calm face showed that danger meant nothing to him.

The ship's owner, Monsieur Morrel, could not wait for the ship to arrive in port, and jumped into a small boat. 'Take me to the *Pharaon*!' he ordered his men, and soon he was on the ship's deck.

'Welcome home, Dantès!' he said to the young man. 'But where is Captain Leclère?'

'It's very sad, Monsieur,' replied Edmond Dantès, taking off his hat. 'We lost our good captain between Naples and Rome.'

'And the cargo?' asked the owner worriedly.

port a town with a harbour, where ships can come in to land

deck the floor of a ship

Monsieur /mə'sjɜː/ the French word for 'Mr'

cargo the things that a ship carries

The Pharaon sailed into Marseille.



'It's all safe, Monsieur. But poor Captain Leclère died very suddenly, after a short illness. We gave him a sailor's **funeral**, and there he rests, on the Mediterranean seabed.'

'Well, we all have to die at some time. As long as the cargo—'

'All is well with it, Monsieur. But here is Monsieur Danglars, who takes care of that side of things. You can ask him.'

The owner turned to a man of about twenty-five, with a dark, unsmiling face. The sailors hated him as much as they loved Dantès.

'Well, Monsieur,' said Danglars. 'You've heard the bad news.'

'Yes, yes, poor Captain Leclère. A fine, honest man.'

'And an excellent sailor, just the kind of man for an important company like Morrel and Son,' answered Danglars.

'Yes, although it's good to see that Dantès can take the captain's place so well,' said Morrel, watching Edmond.

'Well,' said Danglars, looking at Dantès with **hatred** in his eyes, 'he's young and **confident**. But he made us lose a day and a half by stopping at the island of Elba, for no good reason.'

'Did he?' replied Morrel, surprised. 'That was wrong of him. Dantès!' he called. 'Come over here! I'd like a word with you.'

The young man came closer. 'Yes, Monsieur?' he asked.

'I wanted to ask why you stopped at the island of Elba.'

'Monsieur, I had to obey Captain Leclère's last order. As he lay dying, he told me to take a letter to the **Emperor** Napoleon, who's living on Elba, and that's what I did.'

'Young man,' said Morrel, 'you did well to obey your captain, but perhaps you'll get into trouble for it. The King and his friends will be angry if they hear you've taken a letter to their worst enemy.'

'I only obeyed an order. Is that all, Monsieur?'

'I think the Emperor gave him a letter to take to someone in Paris,' Danglars whispered in the shipowner's ear. 'I – I saw it!'

funeral the time when a dead person is put under the ground

hatred a feeling of great dislike

confident sure of yourself

emperor king of a big country or a group of countries

'If Dantès has a letter, he'll tell me about it,' replied Morrel confidently. 'Dantès, you're free to go now. Can you come and have dinner at my house this evening?'

'Thank you for your kind invitation, Monsieur, but the first thing I must do is visit my father. He's an old man now.'

'You're a good son, Dantès. And you have another person to visit perhaps? A lover? The beautiful Mercedes?'

'We are not lovers, Monsieur,' the young man replied seriously. 'She is my **fiancée**. We hope to marry very soon.'

'Well, go now, Dantès, and in three months' time, come back to see me. The *Pharaon* will be ready for the next trip,' and Morrel put his hand on Edmond's shoulder, 'with its new captain.'

'Oh Monsieur!' cried Edmond in **delight**. 'Thank you a thousand times! It's my dearest wish!'

And with this wonderful news in his head, the young man walked quickly away from the waterside and into the narrow streets of the old town. Soon he came to a small house and hurried up the dark stairs to his father's room. Here he spent several hours with his father, making sure that the old man had everything that he needed. Then Edmond hurried out of Marseille, towards a fishing village.

Mercedes, a lovely young girl with dark hair and beautiful soft eyes, was standing in her living room, looking dreamily out of the window at the sea. She was thinking of Edmond. Behind her a tall young man was speaking to her.

fiancée the woman that a man has promised to marry

delight a feeling of great happiness

Mercedes was thinking of Edmond.



'Please, Mercedes,' he was saying, 'think about our wedding! You know how much I love you! Give me your answer!'

'You've had it a hundred times, Fernand,' the girl replied. 'I love you like a brother, but my heart belongs to another man.'

'But I've dreamed of being your husband for ten years, Mercedes! Don't take away that hope! Say 'yes' to me!'

'Fernand, I love Edmond Dantès! I will marry no other man!'

'Perhaps he'll die! Or perhaps he's forgotten you!'

'Mercedes!' cried a happy voice outside. 'Mercedes!'

'Ah!' cried the girl, running to the door in delight. 'You see, he hasn't forgotten me! Edmond, I'm here!'

Suddenly, Edmond and Mercedes were in each other's arms. At first, their happiness cut them off from the rest of the world, and they saw nothing of what was around them. But then Edmond noticed Fernand, who had a dangerous-looking knife in his left hand.

'Who is this?' Edmond asked Mercedes.

'He will be your best friend, Edmond, because he's my very dear **cousin**. This is Fernand.'

Edmond smiled and put out his hand, but Fernand, his face dark and full of hatred, did not move. Mercedes stepped forward.

'Fernand, put that knife away, and remember this,' she said, her eyes shining angrily. 'If anything happens to Edmond, I shall kill myself. Now you're going to shake hands with him like a friend.'

Slowly Fernand offered his right hand, but as soon as Edmond touched it, he ran out of the house.

'What can I do, what can I do?' Fernand cried wildly.

'Stop a minute!' called Danglars, who was sitting under a tree with a bottle of **wine**. 'You look unhappy. Have a drink with me.'

Without really knowing what he was doing, Fernand sat down on the grass and drank the wine.

cousin the son or daughter of your uncle or aunt

wine a red or white alcoholic drink made from grapes

'So your lovely cousin Mercedes has decided, has she?' said Danglars. 'She's going to marry Edmond Dantès, is she?'

'Yes, and I can't stop it!' cried Fernand angrily.

'But you can if you want to, my friend,' said Danglars. 'Let me show you what to do. Just write a short letter to Monsieur Villefort, the **crown prosecutor**. In the letter you say that Dantès is an enemy of our King, because he's visited the **wicked** Napoleon on the island of Elba, and even carries a letter from him. You see? It's easy!'

'But if I do that, Edmond will die!'

'Who knows? Perhaps he'll go to prison. But what does it matter? You'll have the lovely Mercedes!' And to himself, Danglars was thinking, 'This will stop Dantès becoming captain of the *Pharaon*!'

Danglars' wicked plan worked well. The next day was Edmond's wedding day, but just as he and Mercedes were getting ready to go to the church, Edmond was arrested. Danglars smiled to himself as he watched the police take the young man away.

crown prosecutor the person whose job is to show that people are criminals

wicked very bad

Edmond was arrested.



READING CHECK

Choose the best words to complete the sentences.

- a On February 24th 1815 ...
 - 1 Napoleon gives Edmond Dantès a letter.
 - 2 the captain of the *Pharaon* – Leclère – dies.
 - 3 the *Pharaon* arrives in Marseille.
- b Dantès took a letter to Napoleon on Elba because ...
 - 1 he had to follow Captain Leclère's orders.
 - 2 he is a friend of the old Emperor.
 - 3 he was paid for taking it.
- c Monsieur Morrel wants Edmond to ...
 - 1 be the next captain of the *Pharaon*.
 - 2 get into trouble.
 - 3 visit Mercedes.
- d The first thing Edmond does in Marseille is to ...
 - 1 go to Monsieur Morrel's house for dinner.
 - 2 visit his father.
 - 3 visit the beautiful Mercedes.
- e When Edmond goes to visit Mercedes, she is ...
 - 1 alone.
 - 2 angry with Edmond.
 - 3 with Fernand, who wants to marry her.
- f Danglars doesn't want ...
 - 1 Edmond to be the new captain of the *Pharaon*.
 - 2 Fernand to be unhappy.
 - 3 Mercedes to marry Edmond.
- g Edmond is arrested because ...
 - 1 Danglars wrote a letter to Villefort.
 - 2 Fernand wrote a letter to Villefort.
 - 3 Morrel wrote a letter to Villefort.



WORD WORK

1 Correct the boxed words in these sentences.

- a Beaujolais is the name of a famous French red **line** wine.
- b Marseille is a **part** in the south of France.
- c Edmond Dantès is standing on the **neck** of the *Pharaon* when it arrives.
- d Danglars thinks of a very **picked** plan.
- e People in Europe often wear black to go to a **funnel**.

2 Find words in the knives to complete the sentences.

- a Napoleon was the **Emperor** of France just before the story begins. **romerp**
- b Mercedes is Edmond's **f** **cinéca**.
- c Fernand is Mercedes' **c** **nosiu**.
- d Villefort is the **c** **worn tresuroco** **p** in Marseille.
- e Morrel is the owner of the *Pharaon* and its **c** **gaor**.
- f Danglars is Edmond's enemy; he feels only **h** **radte** for him.
- g Edmond is a very **c** **fontiend** young man.
- h Mercedes cries with **d** **thelig** when she sees Edmond.

GUESS WHAT

What do you think happens in the next chapter? Tick three boxes.

- a Villefort speaks to Edmond.
- b Villefort thinks that Edmond is a criminal.
- c Edmond can go free.
- d Edmond goes to prison.
- e Mercedes marries Edmond.
- f Napoleon becomes Emperor again.