

500 Words of Less Reviews: The Count of Monte Cristo (Book)

Sprawling, epic, multifaceted, ingenious. Those are just four great words that describe the 1462-page unabridged copy of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. This massive work was written by Alexandre Dumas. It was published in 18 installments in a popular French newspaper. Do you want to know what happens? Everything. Everything happens. The tale recounts the long story of the young, promising seaman Edmund Dantes. On the eve of his marriage to the beautiful Mercedes, three jealous rivals (technically four, but he is very drunk and doesn't really know what's going on) plot to get him thrown into prison for treason.

Halfway through this term, he is on the brink of madness and committing suicide when he meets the kindly, wise, industrious and extremely knowledgeable Abbe Faria. For the next few years, the abbe bequeaths to Dantes all of his substantial earthly knowledge and on his final deathbed the knowledge of a vast fortune hidden on the island of Monte Cristo. After the death of his friend, teacher, and mentor, Dantes escapes and indeed finds this mountain of treasure securely hidden on the island for many, many years.

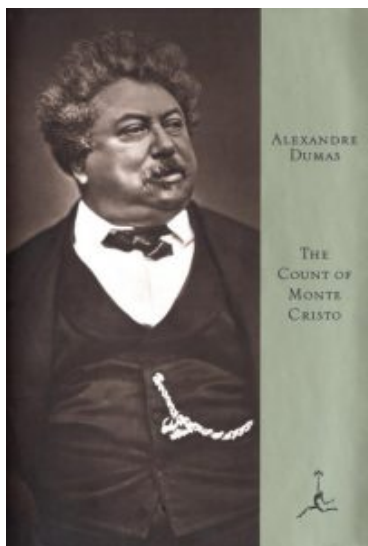
Despite the wise words of the abbe that revenge will not bring him peace, Edmund (who now calls himself *The Count of Monte Cristo*) spends the next ten years concocting an incredibly complex plan of vengeance of the men involved in his wrongful imprisonment with almost 1200 pages worth of carrying out his end game.

The synopsis I have just given might be sufficient to describe

the recent 2002 movie adaptation of the book (it is to that popular adaptation I will be referring to when I mention the film version), but it is certainly not an adequate representation of the novel itself. The staggering complexity of the novel is something the movie did not even hint at. I love the movie, I really do, but it is barely an outline of the real deal. It is really only minorly inspired by the full story. The real story is infinitely more complex, rich, and, as mentioned, sprawling. When I say that everything is in this book I mean there is just that. And that is only a slight exaggeration. There is action, adventure, mystery, comedy, drama, romance, and at least a hundred subgenres in each of these genres. There are stories in stories and stories in stories in stories.

There are so many richly drawn characters and subplots here that for sizable chunks of the book the count isn't even involved or is but a secondary character. One of the overarching of these characters: God. Not surprisingly, almost all talk of God is exempt from the theatrical rendition. As a result, I think the ending is very different and the conclusions of the count are very different from the cut and dried tale on film.

In conclusion, although the trip is long and sometimes tedious, it is a trip incredibly worth it. Here's to them making the wise decision to make this into a two-week miniseries.



This is the cover
of the edition I
read.