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SLO Exam

Cosette experienced many hardships in her life. However, things always look better for her though. Cosette represents hope and beauty in *Les Miserables*. She went from being a non loved little orphan girl to being a loved beautiful woman.

“The Thenardiers began to look upon the little girl as a child which they sheltered for charity, and treated her as such. Her clothes being gone, they dressed her in castoff garments of the little Thenardiers that is rags” (Hugo 41). Cosette was born with misfortune in her fate. She was born to Fantine, and without a father. Her mother could no longer take care of her anymore. Fantine handed her beautiful, young daughter to the notorious Thenardiers. As soon as the Thenardiers took her in “as a charity case,” she became their own personal servant. Cosette never really knew of any other treatment. In the book, she just deals with the cards that she is handed.

“It will be remembered that Cosette was useful to the Thenardiers in two ways: they got pay from the mother and work from the child” (Hugo 130). The Thenardiers did not treat Cosette as one of their own. She was malnourished, and she looked disheveled. Her clothes were too small, and she was forced to do manual labor around the clock seven days a week. Her misfortune is at its peak when it is said that she does not have any real toys. Instead of being spoiled by her parents like the Thenardier’s two girls, she had to play with toys that she created with her surroundings.

“Cosette could not stir that she did not draw upon herself a hailstorm of undeserved and severe chastisements” (Hugo 42). Cosette never complained, although she knew that she did not belong there. Where were her real parents? She deserved better though. She dealt with the child abuse because she did not know any other way of life. She was always envious of the Thenardier’s daughters, Eponine and Azelma. Cosette was never jealous of their amount of work, but she was however jealous of their toys and amount of playtime.

Jean Valjean made a promise to Fantine that he would take care of Cosette for her. The first thing that he did was save her from the Thenardiers. Cosette was forced to fetch water from the creek, using a heavy bucket.

“My child, that is very heavy for you which you carrying there.” Cosette raised her head and answered: “Yes, monsieur.” “Give it to me,” the man continued. “I will carry it for you.” Cosette let go of the bucket. The man walked along with her. “It is very heavy, indeed,” said he to himself” (Hugo 138). Cosette’s character always has a way of having hope. This man, who she did not know, took the bucket full of water from her and walked it back to the Thenardier’s inn. Cosette was surprised to see that in this world of misery, there was one person that could be able to help her.

“Cosette followed him without difficulty. She felt fatigue no more. From time to time, she raised her eyes toward this man with a sort of tranquility and inexpressible confidence. She had never been taught to burn toward Providence and to pray. However, she felt in her bosom something that resembled hope and joy, and which rose toward heaven” (Hugo 140). Through the love of Jean Valjean, Cosette transformed. She went from being a not cared for, young slave girl to a beautiful young lady, through love. Cosette was now beautiful, and fit the character of a young lady in that time period. She had a new life, and I think her fate was always better than her reality. She deserved way more than what the Thenardiers could give her. She could mean more to someone else, which is why Jean Valjean’s fate and hers connect. When Jean Valjean rescued her from the Thenardiers, she did not have much emotion; she just knew that she had to get out of there.

Cosette is one of the characters in the book that never shows how she feels; she is more of a symbol than a storyline character. She went from being a symbol of hope, and then to beauty.

“She seemed more beautiful than she had ever seemed before, Beautiful with a beauty which combined all of the woman with all of the angel, a beauty which would have made a Petrarch sing and Dante kneel” (Hugo 242). Cosette had a long journey to finally be happy. Though she never showed like anything bothered her, we all know that it did. She grew from her misfortune in life.

In the end of the novel she is with Marius. They fell in love and got married. Marius fell in love at first site with Cosette. They began living together. Marius pushed Jean Valjean away because he felt that he was becoming a burden.