



[The Three Musketeers](#), by Alexandre Dumas

In A Nutshell

Alexandre Dumas originally published *The Three Musketeers* in serials, appearing one chapter at a time in the Parisian newspaper *Le Siècle* from March 14, 1844 to July 1, 1844. The serial form was a popular way for newspaper publishers to boost readership: think of it as today's weekly TV shows, which keep the audience in suspense from one episode to the next.

Dumas's story of four young heroes battling for glory and women was even more popular when it was written than it is today. It is safe to say that this book has reached canonical status: it has been continuously in print ever since its release, cementing its reputation as a well-loved swashbuckling adventure novel.

Being forced to publish *The Three Musketeers* as a series meant that each new installment had a certain number of page or line requirements. This, in part, explains why the novel is dialogue-heavy. Dumas was trying to meet his line quota, and dialogue provides ample opportunity for line breaks. The author was particularly suited to this style of writing since he previously worked as a dramatist. This helps explain the theatrical nature of some of the scenes, particularly the chapters towards the end. The serial nature of the novel also explains why most chapters end with a cliffhanger of some sort. By today's standards, *The Three Musketeers* a "real page-turner," but, back in Dumas's day, this suspenseful style simply ensured that customers would continue buying newspapers.

Part of what made Dumas's novel so popular is his use of historical events and characters.

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Queen Anne of Austria was real, as was her husband (Louis XIII), Cardinal Richelieu, and others. Also, a man named John Felton really did assassinate the Duke of Buckingham. The central characters of the story, however (Milady, D'Artagnan, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis), are all imagined.

You should also keep in mind that, although Dumas inserts history into *The Three Musketeers*, it's his own particular version of history. Suggesting that the Duke of Buckingham went to war for the love of Queen Anne, or that John Felton assassinated the Duke for love of Milady is a bit farfetched. Those events did happen, but for different reasons. Even though it's not always historically accurate, Dumas's version sure does make for great fiction.

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Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 D'Artagnan ignores his father's advice by selling the yellow pony. What other pieces of his father's advice did he reject? What did he follow? How does the elder D'Artagnan's advice at the beginning of the novel influence the rest of the novel?
- 2 We offer you three ways of breaking up this text: the Classic Plot Analysis, the Booker's Seven Basic Plots Analysis, and the Three Act Plot Analysis. Are there other ways of breaking up the text?
- 3 What's up with the chapter titles? Take a sample chapter and analyze the effect of the title on your analysis of the story.

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