

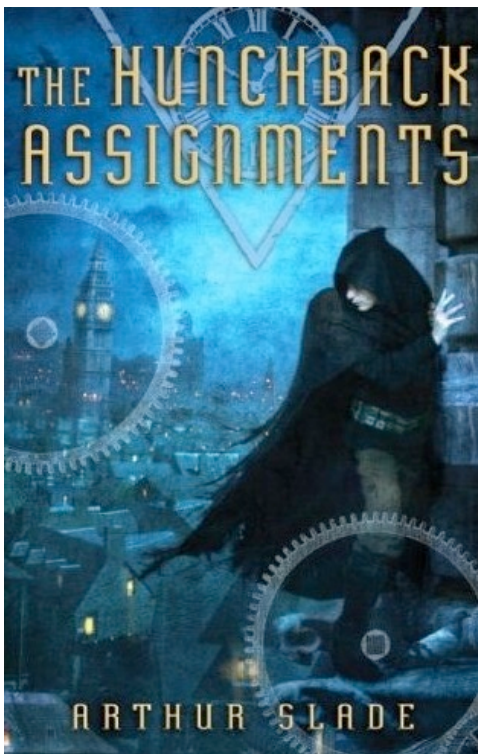
*The Hunchback Assignments* is not only highly-readable tale for students who love thrilling mysteries and dark, scary twists; it can integrate into the classroom in numerous educational ways. Used for independent study (as the subject of a reader response journal, for example), group study (offering numerous points for brainstorming and discussion) or as a class unit, there are plenty of themes, links to history and literary devices to be explored.

Below, educators will find ideas for classroom integration of the book as well as discussion, theme and cross-curricular activity ideas. Educators can use the questions following each activity to drive readers to significant themes, history and ideas stemming from the novel. Finally, the discussion points immediately following the cross-curricular activities can serve as the basis of class discussion, independent reader responses or to formulate an independent study unit. The use of the internet will help students navigate not only the official *Hunchback Assignments* website (where they will uncover videos and interesting factoids) but will provide them with a platform to search many of the ideas, places and historical personages that inspire and inform elements of the story. Throughout, important places, names, people or terms are outlined in bold for further study, discussion and research.

### **I: LANGUAGE ARTS:**

**Genre** is defined as a loose set of criteria for a category of composition or literature.

*The Hunchback Assignments* has been promoted as belonging to the “steampunk” genre: fiction set in an era or world where steam is widely used. This genre often introduces technological inventions like those presented in the works of H.G. Wells and Jules Verne. While reading the novel, students can pay close attention to the role machines and technology play and consider the positive and negative



effects of steam and machinery. Students may also want to consider how *The Hunchback Assignments* could be classified as one of the following genres:

- Historical Fiction
- Fantasy
- Science Fiction
- Mystery

(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/rl/ll/litr/genres.asp> provides a comprehensive list of genres and their definitions)

- Q: Which genre do you think *The Hunchback Assignments* would best be labeled as? Why?



### Study on Character:

The word **character** not only refers to a person featured in a work of fiction but also to a combination of qualities or feature that distinguishes someone from others.

Popular **character traits** include: **empathy** (the identification with and understanding of another's situation); **perseverance** (steadily pursuing a course of action or objections in spite of difficulties) and **courage** (a quality of mind or spirit that allows a person to face difficulty or danger). Students can consider the qualities listed above and decide which character best aligns with the above trait and why.

•Q: If you had to choose only one character to match each of the traits above, who would you choose? Using examples from the novel, explain why you think that character is best identified by the character trait you chose for them. Can you think of other character traits not listed? Who best suits its description? Why?

**Create a Vocab List:** Words students may be unfamiliar with such as gnarled (p.15) and cravat (p.57) are used throughout the novel. Encourage students to create a vocabulary sheet where they can list unfamiliar words and look them up in the dictionary later.

- Q. What are some of the words in the story you were unfamiliar with? Write an example of a sentence using the same word in a different context

- Q. Choose your favourite descriptive passage from the novel (one where numerous words and adjectives describe a setting, character or event e.g., Modo scaling the rooftops on pp.62-63). What are some of the words that help create the atmosphere and scene?

### **Introduction to Literary Terms and Devices:**

**Adaptation:** adapting a story from another source or subject. *The Hunchback Assignments* is a loose adaptation (or re-imagining) of *Notre Dame de Paris (or The Hunchback of Notre Dame)* by Victor Hugo. While not a close adaptation of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* story, the author uses many similar elements. After reading an overview of the Hugo novel (such as the synopsis section of the Wikipedia article found easily through a quick google search), students will notice some similarities (for example, while Quasimodo is stationed in the bell tower at Notre Dame by the sinister Claude Frolo, Modo is educated and subsequently trained for his life as a secret agent up in the skylight cupola e.g., p.26). Students can research other popular Victorian novels and consider how they may have inspired elements of *The Hunchback Assignments* using examples from the text:

For consideration:

- *Sherlock Holmes* (from the collection of stories by Arthur Conan Doyle):the great crime-solving detective/Octavia and Modo solve a mystery using their deductive skills and Modo serves a consulting detective
- *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley):the story of a scientist gone mad and his creepy/Dr. Hyde creates a ghastly machine powered by humans/ Octavia is seen reading *Frankenstein* on p.87
- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Robert Louis Stevenson): a novella exploring the dark and light side of human nature and what happens when a doctor creates a concoction which brings out an evil counterpart/the name Hyde factors into the story as the name of the sinister creator who uses children for his experiments
- Q: What story would you would like to see adapted or re-imagined in another time or setting? Explain your choice.

### **Stylistic Devices:**

**Alliteration:** consists of the same consonant sound at the beginning of several words in close succession

**Consonance:** refers to the repetition of the same consonant two or times in succession

**Assonance:** refers to the repetition of vowel sounds

- Q. Find two sentences or short paragraphs in the novel which exemplify each of the stylistic devices listed above.

- Q. Create three different sentences each one using alliteration, consonance and assonance in turn.

### **Literary Devices:**

**Foreshadowing:** occurs when the author provides a clue or an indication to the reader that something is going to happen.

- Q. Find an example of foreshadowing in the story. How does the author hint at an event while still maintaining an element of suspense?

**Dramatic Irony:** gives the reader an item of information the characters in the story are unaware of.

- Q. Find an example of dramatic irony in the novel. Which character remains unaware of what is going to happen? If you were involved in the plot, how might you warn them?

**Dialect:** refers to a variety of language characteristic of a certain group of people. For example, the **Cockney** dialect is usually spoken by lower class Londoners and often uses rhyming and slang. The author uses Cockney several times in the novel: first, when Modo plays at a Cockney accent for Mrs. Finchley (p.19) and then when Modo arrives in London (e.g., “Who u wearin’ a mask. Let me ‘ave it” p.53).

- Q. Can you find any other examples of dialect in the story? Where are they?
- Q: Do you think that adding dialect to a story helps make it seem more believable? Why?
- Q: Do you think a character’s speech or dialect is just as important in creating the atmosphere and setting as research and facts? Why or why not?

## **II: TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **The Science of Deduction:**

Deduction is a key power detectives and forensic scientists use to help glean clues and information from sometimes seemingly small things (think CSI).

- Q. How does Modo use his deductive powers? (e.g., he can tell a lot about Octavia by ink p.109)
- Q. What are some of the ways modern technology ( such as the internet, GPS systems, cell phones ) could have influenced how Modo solved his mysteries as a private investigator and how he and Octavia uncovered the secret of Mr. Hyde?

### **Website Scavenger Hunt**

***The Hunchback Assignments website:*** is an easy way to find educational activity ideas.

→ scour the internet for a FACTOID to add to those listed in the Steamtrunk section

→ create a Facebook profile for Modo or Octavia: what would their interests be? who might be listed on their friends page? What popular groups or fan pages might they join?

- Q: the website features videos where the author talks to you directly about the story. If you could ask Arthur Slade one question about *The Hunchback Assignments*, its characters, or its writing process, what would it be?
- Q: Watch the video about Octavia Milkweed: How important are clothes to Octavia's profession? Why?

### **The B.O.O.K.E.D Assignment:**

As an accompaniment to the novel, educators and students can visit Youtube and discover a range of videos featuring a class of students whose "assignments" were to answer numerous questions about the book, the characters and the story. Students can compare their opinions to those of the kids featured in the video series. Click on the following link for Enter Octavia Milkweed: (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvZltWQMxaI&feature=related>) –this link will aid in the navigation to other videos in the series.

- Q: Is there anything about the novel you noticed that the B.O.O.K.E.D kids didn't mention in the video?
- Q: Choose one response from the video you agree with. Why do you agree? Choose one response you disagree with. How is your opinion or impression of the story different from the student interviewed?
- Q: Can you think of any other questions you would ask readers of the book? What would they be?

### **The Victorian Era:**

At [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org), students will learn everything from technology to popular entertainment; philosophy and science. Many websites, such as [www.vandaimages.com](http://www.vandaimages.com) provide numerous photographs and illustrations of life in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England for students to study and explore.

### **The Industrial Revolution:**

Students can read about the Industrial Revolution by doing a quick search of the key words "industrial revolution" at [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com). There, students will find an overview of this period in world history as well as hyperlinks to related subtopics such as: looms, steamships, and mass production.

### **Popular places and ideas from Modo's world:**

**John Merrick:** Modo's role in traveling freakshow is not unlike Victorian personage John Merrick (more commonly known as *the Elephant Man*) A quick Google search on John Merrick or *The Elephant Man* will lead students to a variety of photographs,

anecdotes and histories of Merrick's life where they will uncover elements of his early development and his role as a sideshow performer.

As Modo is observed and influenced by Mr. Socrates, Merrick was influenced and examined by physician **Frederick Treves**. Students can Google Frederick Treves and learn about his science and discovery

**Rudyard Kipling**: famous author of the *Jungle Book*, championed **Imperialism** (\*see **key terms and ideas in the HISTORY section**). Students can search and read his poem *The White Man's Burden* (an anthem of Imperialism and the British Empire) as well as the **British Empire** and its many successes and triumphs.

**Queen Victoria**: is England's longest running monarch. She and her husband **Prince Albert** inspired numerous changes to Britain's social world and political structure. **Queen Victoria** was also a great patron of the arts. The Victoria and Alberta Museum in London bears witness to her great influence.

- Q. Can you think of any famous Victorians? Who are they? What did they accomplish?
- Q. Choose a famous person who lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Using the internet write a short biographical sketch on their life and work
- Q. Queen Victoria was a fan of the arts. What are some ways you can tell the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century was ruled by an art-lover? How doe art (music, drama, literature, theatre) in the Victorian Era influence art today?

### III:ART

- Draw a Map of Octavia and Modo's journey through sewers
- Create a machine like Dr. Hyde's: what would it do, who would power it, what would be its end gain? Draw a sketch or blueprint of your machine and how it would work: labeling the most important functions and pieces of it.
- Sherlock Holmes referred to a foggy day in London as "the perfect day for murder." Using Modo's London as inspiration, draw London at its eeriest
- A **storyboard** is used to depict action sequences before they are filmed in a movie or tv show. A storyboard looks somewhat like a comic strip and outlines images with a purpose of pre-visualizing how a scene will play out. Pick a scene from *The Hunchback Assignments* featuring more than one character. Use speech bubbles to outline the dialogue and draw a rough storyboard of how you imagine

the scene to play out. Make sure to pay attention to details such as descriptions, setting, time of day and where the characters may be standing or sitting.

#### **IV: HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES:**

##### **The Victorian Era:**

The rise of machinery and steam in Victorian England is often known as the **Industrial Revolution**: a period of major change in transportation (such as the invention of the railroad) and the rise of machine-based manufacturing (often produced in factories with equipment suited to create on a mass level). Students can consider modern technology and The Industrial Revolution and how the Industrial Revolution still influences our modern life and technology

**Employment in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century:** The following occupations are mentioned in *The Hunchback Assignments*

**Costermongers:** street sellers of fruit and vegetables

**Clockworkers:** worked and wound the clocks

**Beefeaters:** ceremonial guardians of the Tower of London

**Newsies:** newsboys who ran and advertised headlines on the streets to sell papers

- Q: Which occupation would you least like to have? Why?
- Q: what are some of the ways in which a good headline was important to the work and survival of the newsboys?
- Q: can you think of a gripping headline inspired by the events of *The Hunchback Assignments*? What is it? Why do you think it will catch readers' attention?

##### **Key Terms and Ideas:**

**DARWINISM** is a term referring to the ideas and beliefs of Charles Darwin and his theory of Evolution. As technological changes were prominent in the Victorian period so were longstanding religious and scientific beliefs. Darwin's theories were empowering to some and confusing and uncomfortable to those who had always held the same Christian beliefs. One of Darwin's beliefs implies **natural selection**: where those individuals best adapted to their environment are most likely to survive. In *The Hunchback Assignments* Mr. Socrates says **natural selection** endows a capacity to change "features" (p.24) As well as learning a little more about Darwin and his influence on the Victorian period, students can consider how Modo's shape-shifting ability allows him to survive in the most difficult of environments and find examples of this ability and change in the novel for support.

**Religion and God vs. Man and the Machine?:** The machines and inventions in the Victorian period offer examples of all-powerful inventions that could create in a God-like way. This provided a great conflict and while many believed in the merits of industrialization and the burgeoning theories of science by men such as Darwin, others were reticent to change their ways.

- Q. Do you think Mr. Hyde is successful at playing God?
- Q.If you lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, do you think you would be ready to support radical changes in inventions and religious beliefs? Or would it take you longer to shift from the beliefs you had always held? Why?
- Q. Can you think of other stories in which a machine plays a gargantuan part?

**IMPERIALISM:** the term **imperialism** applies to an empire extending its rule and authority over other countries. The ruling **British Empire** (which reached the height of its power under the reign of Queen Victoria) set out to occupy, trade and benefit from the resource found in India, Africa and other foreign nations. The influence of The **British Empire** is still seen today. For example, Canada is still a part of **the British Commonwealth** and the Queen is still Canada's **head-of-state**

- Q.Consider Tharpa's role in Mado's upbringing and as a servant in Mr. Socrates' house. How does Tharpa represent Imperialism? (p.19 and several places throughout the novel)

A **MONARCHY:** is a form of government where one individual holds supreme power. Queen Victoria was the reigning monarch in Britain for almost 65 years.

- Q.What are some advantages of having a ruling monarch over a country?
- Q.What are some disadvantages of a monarchy?

## V:SOCIOLOGY

Have students discuss the ramifications of the up-rise of **steam** and **industry** in the **Industrial Revolution** in greater context. For example, how did Victorian innovation paved the way for pollution and contribute to current Global crises? Alternatively, how did the **Industrial Revolution** influence the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in positive ways?

### **Justice and the Law:**

Have students consider and discuss the following quotes from the novel:

- “Justice isn't always on the side of the just”
- “No way to stop justice once its wheels have begun to roll”



- Q.How would you dispense justice on Oscar Featherstone? Would it he be found guilty or innocent? Why?

Have students consider the unfair persecution of Modo (as an outcast ridiculed for his disfigurement) and the orphan children (cast out simply for not having a family).

- Q. Do you think Modo and the orphans (such as Octavia and Oppie) are on their way to receiving justice at the end of the novel? Why or why not?
- Q. How might society have to change in order for justice for the disadvantaged be served?

**VI:GEOGRAPHY** Students can locate and study a map of Victorian Era London (such as this period specific railway map: <http://www.victorianlondon.org/maps/railwaymap.htm>)

Encourage students to use the map to try and navigate some of the key places mentioned in *The Hunchback Assignments* such as **The Tower of London** and the **Harbourfront**.

Students can research **The London Sewer System**: known as being revolutionary for its time. Considering the author’s description of the sewers on pp.194-106 and what words are used to paint images in reader’s minds.

- Q.How do the sewers best work to Octavia and Modo’s advantage?

## **VII:GROUP and INDEPENDENT STUDY TOPICS/IDEAS**

Discuss the **IMPORTANCE OF NAMES** and what they tell us about the character considering the following:

### **Octavia:**

- The author says her name suited her as there was something “regal” about her (p. 11)
- The same name as Octavius’ sister in Classic Rome

### **Modo:**

- Mr. Gibbons tells Modo that in Latin his name means “formed”; In the Hugo story, Quasimodo means half-formed

### **Mr. Socrates:**

- the same name as a famous Greek philosopher and writer; often thought of as one of the greatest thinkers of all time

**Mr. Hyde:**

- see Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* where Hyde personifies the evil half of a man's personality.

Discuss the importance of **BOOKS AND READING** in the novel considering the following:

- When Modo is growing up with Mrs. Finchley and Tharpa he is surrounded by books
- Mr. Socrates wants Modo to read about warfare, whereas Modo would rather read fairy stories
- Numerous books such as *Frankenstein*; and *the Coral Island* are mentioned in the novel
- Octavia finds Hamlet "marvellously boring" with the exception of one part. What does she like about Hamlet? Why?
- When Octavia asks Modo if he knows about croquet, he answers that he has only read about it. What are some of the ways reading about something differs from experiencing it?
- Some readers may find the Hunchback Assignments difficult to describe to their friends because there are so many things happening. If you could describe the story in one sentence, what would you include? Why?

**Setting:**

- Q. Victorian London is often the setting for thrilling tales such as *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the *Sherlock Holmes* stories and many horror stories (e.g., Jack the Ripper). Considering what you have learned about London, why does the setting offer such a wonderful landscape and backdrop for thrilling tales?

Discuss the following relating to the importance of **APPEARANCE**:

- Modo wants nothing more than to look like everyone else and Octavia wishes she could move in and around the city in the same way that boys do. How would life be different for Modo if he wasn't a hunchback? How would life be different for Octavia if she was a boy? Do you think they would they still be the same people? Why or why not?

- Mr. Socrates tells Modo he is ugly every day. Do you think Modo would have the same opinion of himself if raised by Tharpa and Mrs. Finchley? How would this have changed his destiny?
- Is the only real difference between Octavia and Modo the fact that she is beautiful and Modo is, in his own words, “repulsive?”
- Can you imagine being friends with someone you could never see? Would you want to remain friends? Why or why not?
- The children are not upset by Modo’s appearance. Do you think Octavia would be upset? Why or why not?

### **Orphan stories:**

- Why are orphans so popular in literature? How do they use their circumstances to create “new” families and beginnings? Why do they make for such a good story? (e.g., *Harry Potter*, *The Secret Garden*, *Oliver Twist*)
- Use the internet or school library to learn more about workhouses and orphanages (the type of establishment where Hyde would find his “children” or where Octavia might have lived when she was growing up). How have conditions changed for the underprivileged since the Victorian period. In what ways could they still improve?

### **Discuss the following quotes:**

- “Being an orphan should not make you worthless!” (Octavia, p.178)
- “The world will often underestimate you”.(Mr. Socrates p.25)

### **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- This book is the first in what is going to be a series featuring Octavia and Modo. Considering our early encounters with Modo (as he is being instructed by Mrs. Finchley and Tharpa) and our introduction to Octavia (especially her resourceful way of getting around London) do you think the author does a good job of making his characters likeable enough to follow through a series? Why or why not?
- Even though Modo is shocked and scared to be left in London on his own, he ends up being an exceptional detective in the absence of Mrs. Finchley, Tharpa and Mr. Socrates. Have you ever been scared to do something that turned out to work very well for you? What was it?
- Modo learns about history, war and politics with Tharpa. Which proves most important to his career as an agent?
- Do you think the book sets up a sequel well? Why or why not?
- Would you rather read a historical book that presents well-researched facts from a specific time period, or one that makes you feel, through atmosphere and setting that you were there? Why?
- The term “**double-standard**” refers to instances where one set of rules applies to one group of people but not to another. Do you think there is a different set of rules for girls (like Octavia) and boys during the time when the novel is set? Why or why not?
- How would *the Hunchback Assignments* work as a movie? Who would you cast to play the main characters? Why?
- When Modo confronts Mr. Socrates he is very angry with him. If you were in Modo’s situation, would you continue to work for Mr. Socrates or desert him as payment for leaving you poor and on your own? Why?
- Even though Modo can shape-shift into anyone he wants, Octavia cannot. How is Octavia like a shape-shifter in her own way?
- Modo refuses to show Octavia his face because he is certain she will be repulsed; yet when he rescues the children from the machine, they do not flinch at the sight of his disfigurement. What reaction do you think Octavia would have? Why?
- Modo and Octavia work very well together because each brings a unique skill and strength to their partnership. Can you think of other combinations in literature where two people work together well?

- How does Modo's condition help him to connect with children of Dr. Hyde's experiment?
- Modo has every right to be angry at Mr. Socrates because he left him on his own. Would you forgive Mr. Socrates? Why or why not?
- Modo begins to resent Mr. Socrates when he recognizes that his former teacher could not understand the children because he was never poor. What are some ways Mr. Socrates could have tried to understand the children and their lives even if he came from a different background?