

Les Mucho Miserables at Victor Hugo Middle School

By Gregory T. Burns

NOTES

One of the most haunting musicals in the world is *Les Miserables*. Victor Hugo's masterpiece set to music embodies the plight of a people overcoming adversity during the harshest of times. This selection satirizes this iconic musical and may be performed by a male or female and be entered in Humorous Interpretation. With innovative blocking and creative direction, however, this short play could also be performed by two actors and be entered in Duet Acting or Duo Interpretation. The lyrics being spoofed are indented throughout the script. Obviously, strong singing voices will only add to the overall professionalism of the presentation; however, if desired, the performer(s) may choose to chant the satirical songs. Please note: The 'Cafeteria Ladies' and 'The Company' at the end of the play may be performed as one character or as many characters as the performer(s) desire. *Les Miserables* is known for its theatricality, so be theatrical and put on a show!

Setting: Various locations of the school

Time: Another dreary, dreadful school day

Characters:

Mr. Hugo, the narrator

Cafeteria Ladies, slop preparers

Croquette, a student victim

Nurse Retched, a sorry excuse of a school nurse

Miss Tacobella, Johnny V.'s Spanish teacher

Johnny V. John, a young man with an intestinal problem

Fantasia, a once intelligent, now *special* student

Coach Javelin, an un-athletic coach

Evelyn, the school's only well-to-do student

Mario, a student in Isolated Detention

Mr. Hugo: It was the best of times—the worst of times. I know, what a little '*Dickens*' I am. Here at Victor Hugo Middle School, it's usually the worst of times. Everyone is miserable. The school is filled with miserable students, miserable teachers, and a miserable administration. Really the only thing *not* miserable here at Victor Hugo Middle School is our mascot: a piece of broken furniture. But there is one group of employees, whose sole purpose is to provide nourishment to its inhabitants. They are the mysteriously hairy—and often *unsanitary* cafeteria ladies.

Cafeteria Ladies: (*To the tune of “Lovely Ladies”*)

Hungry ladies
Working in this school
Pouring slop on broken plates
It isn't very cool.
Hungry ladies
Do we get a break?
Absolutely never
But there is some food to take.
Pureed hot dogs, we serve them up on buns.
Pureed goes much further, and it gives the kids the runs.
Tuesday's oatmeal. They think there's oats, oh boy.
You think they'd figure out that most our food is full of soy.
Hungry ladies
Never finding joy.

Mr. Hugo: Sort of makes you hungry for a good old Sloppy Joe, doesn't it? It's a sad state, indeed, when the only *real* protein found in the cafeteria consists of the various insects and rodents that fall into or are *swatted*—into today's lunch special. What a bunch of bullies those women are! Speaking of bullies, all schools have them. Victor Hugo Middle School is no exception; however, at V.H.M.S., the various gangs are usually armed with weapons. Carrying weapons is, of course, against school policy, but that doesn't stop the juvenile delinquents from brokering them between classes. Of course, bullies can't be bullies without a victim or two, and no one plays the 'victim'—better than young Croquette.

Croquette: (*To the tune of “Castle on a Cloud”*)

There is a bully at this school.
He waits for me to go and swing.
He broke my arm. It's in a sling.
There is a bully at this school.
There is a gang that waits for me.
There are a dozen boys and girls.
Everyone fights and yells at me.
They are not happy 'til I bleed.

Croquette: (*Entering the Nurse's office. She is holding her side with her non-broken hand and arm.*) Nurse Retcher, I'm bleeding. May I have a bandage, please?

Nurse Retcher: (*Sarcastically*) Oh, goody, it's Croquette, our school's little hypochondriac. What is it this time? Did someone stab you with a toothpick?

Croquette: No, it was a switchblade.

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Nurse Retched: What a little cry baby, you are. You know, there are places called hospitals.

Croquette: My family can't afford them. They tell me to come here.

Nurse Retched: Well, aren't I the luckiest school nurse in the whole blooming country? You know, the school doesn't pay me like a doctor gets paid, and I only get so many supplies per semester. Keep this up, Missy, and we'll have to have another school bond just to pay for all the Band-Aids you use.

Croquette: I can't help it. The gangs keep targeting me in the hallways—and in the restroom—and on the playground.

Nurse Retched: Then get the counselors to change your schedule so you can stay in one classroom all day, hold it 'til you get home, and grow-up! Playground, indeed. You can't play your whole life, you know. (*Begrudgingly giving her a Band-Aid*) Here. Put this on once the blood coagulates a bit. If you put it on too soon and it gets all soggy, don't expect me to just hand you another one. Understood? If you'll excuse me, I'm going to go smoke a cigarette. If it weren't against school policy, I'd get snookered right now. (*Disgusted with Croquette and life in general*) Honesty, girls like you—you make me want to drink. (*To herself*) I'd probably make as much working as a receptionist down at the local clinic.

Croquette: (*Still to the tune of "Castle on a Cloud"*)

There is a mean nurse at this school.
She hates to give me bandages.
She doesn't like to do her job.
Not much to look at—is a slob.
I wish my Dad had insurance.
I wish my Mom would pick me up.
Picking me up would be so cool.
There is a bully at this school.

Mr. Hugo: That Collette can really whine, can't she? Makes you want to just back hand her a few times, doesn't it? (*Laughs*) She's a sweet girl, though. Really, she is. If she makes it through *middle* school, she'll probably— Oh, who am I kidding? She'll *never* make it through middle school. (*Laughs*) Oh, well, you know what they say, "Survival of the fittest—" That's just one of the lessons children learn here at Victor Hugo Middle School. Another lesson we teach our students is 'Fitting in,' but it's hard for a student to *fit in*—especially when that student has an intestinal problem—like Johnny V. John.

Miss Tacobella: (*Writing on the chalkboard with her back turned*) All right, class, as you can clearly see, in Spanish, when you conjugate verbs in the past tense—(*An odd 'noise' erupts in the classroom, and she quickly turns around to face the class*) Houston, we have a muy grande problema!