

Credits:

Les Miserables, Volume I, Book Fifth, Chapter VI - "Father Fauchelevent" - by Victor Hugo. Read by Carole Bos, creator of Awesome Stories.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Les-Miserables-Saving-Fauchelevent-Audio-Reading-0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Les-Miserables-Saving-Fauchelevent-Audio-Reading-0>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Hard Is It to Do the Right Thing?

Suppose that you, or someone you love, has a past that you'd like to keep quiet. Maybe it's a secret that no one should know. Maybe you once took the wrong path but have since changed your ways.

Now suppose that someone is in peril and, if you help, your secret will likely become public. You then face a moral dilemma: You really want to help but you also want to keep your secret. What do you do?

Victor Hugo created this situation in his novel *Les Miserables*. A police inspector named Javert once knew a convict who possessed enormous strength. Javert now lives in the same town as the convict who has taken a new name.

Javert suspects that Father Madeleine is actually Jean Valjean, but he doesn't have proof. Valjean suspects that Javert is on to him, but he has never revealed his true identity.

Now an elderly man, known to the townspeople as Father Fauchelevent, is in serious trouble. His cart has overturned and, if the cart isn't moved from crushing him, Fauchelevent will surely die.

Valjean, whom the townspeople known as Father Madeleine, has the strength to lift the cart so that others can rescue Fauchelevent. Javert is nearby, watching. If Madeleine lifts the cart, Javert will see what happens.

If Madeleine rescues Father Fauchelevent, will Javert have the proof he needs to confirm his suspicions?

If he has enough proof, what is Javert likely to do? Will he turn-in Madeleine, even though he is highly respected and employs many of the town's residents in his factory?

Despite the personal risk, Madeleine rescues Fauchelevent. What does that rescue tell us about Madeleine/Valjean's character?

As the chapter ends, and Fauchelevent is rescued, Victor Hugo tells us that Javert and Valjean stare at each other. What, do you think, is going through their minds?

Suppose that Fauchelevent and Valjean were real people, not characters in a story. If Valjean had not helped to rescue the man who was being crushed—thereby protecting his own secret instead of saving a fellow human being—how would he feel when Fauchelevent died? Would there be moral consequences for Valjean? What would they be?