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Here is the definitive fact sheet that sums up everything you need to know about Stendhal's red and black! You can also test your knowledge of French through our questionnaires (literature, poetry, theatre).
Introducing Red and Black
A novel is a mirror that walks down a great path. Sometimes it reflects in your eyes the azure of the sky, sometimes the tusk of the quagmires of the road. And the man wearing the mirror on his hood will be accused by you of being immoral! Your mirror shows the tusk, and you're blaming the mirror! Rather, they blame the great road where the quagmire is located, and even more so the road inspector who lets the water languish and shape quagmire, says Stendhal, a 19th-century writer.
Red and Black, the writing process
The historical context
The novel and narrative have undergone several changes from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. These changes seem to be the result of turmoil in the sociopolitical context that affects all people, especially writers. The nineteenth century is a century rich not only in the number of authors, but also in the different currents present. The many writers have been divided: there are those who have lived through the French revolution since childhood, those who suffered with Napoleon and his authority, those who escaped into nature, those who described reality as it is and many others.... The group of writers who experienced the French revolution, such as Stendhal and his contemporaries, have a different conscience: they think about the impact of a historical event on the individual and not the nation. In July 1830, the French revolutions put an end to restoration; it's time to put a regime back on and finish the monarchy.
Stendhal and Le Rouge et le Noir
It was during this year that Stendhal, a pseud of Marie-Henri Beyle, wrote his second novel entitled The Red and the Black or Chronicles of 1830. This novel is part of a century that sees the exploitation of the fictional genre at the same time as its diversification.
Summary of the novel
Le Rouge et le Noir
In short, it is the story of a young man, Julien Sorel, who becomes the collector of the children of Monsieur de R  nal, the mayor of Verri  res. However, he fell in love with his wife, Madame de R  nal. The success of his teaching accompanied by rumors of love does not hesitate to be heard and declared. Thus, the young Julien, who gained a position as secretary to the Marquis of the Mole, leaves the children and his lover. Once again, the love between Julien and Mathilde, the marquis' daughter, leads the two young men into a proud and delusional relationship.
Pregnant Mathilde declares her love to her father that she finally gives the title of nobility to The dream that has come true, Julien, who has not yet celebrated this honor, is unfortunately surprised by a letter sent from Madame de R  nal. Therefore, the two women fight each other for Julien: the first to take revenge and the second to save him. Unfortunately, Julien ends up dying. Mathilde, desperate, buries the head of her love and, three days later, Madame de R  nal dies.
Interpretation of Red and Black
The title
In fact, the title indicates the opposition present in the text: red as the color of army clothing, and black for priests. In other words, to succeed and live in this era, one must be part of politicians or join religious life and priests. Both have only one goal: to get a sum of money and a respectful social classification. Therefore, Stendhal's goal is reported. His novel is undoubtedly a reflection of the life of this historical period that marked all young people and especially the poor. So, to what extent can we say that Julien Sorel, the protagonist, is a romantic character?
The genre
This novel considered a realistic novel, a novel of love, learning and psychological training accentuates the varied character of Julien Sorel. That's why we'll look at the different traits of the main character character.
Julien Sorel, the hero of the novel
Red and Black
The protagonist of the story is a young villagers of modest origin characterized by different aesthetics and values of this novel. It is thanks to his space and social journey, and thanks to the place of parents (biological and surrogate), such as Father Ch  lan and the lead role of Madame de R  nal that Julien will be trained and educated. It represents young people of its time, it is a realistic status of young people.
Just look at the real name of the verri  res city that actually puts this real situation. He is a shy, fragile and inad experienced young man who constantly cries from the beginning of the novel. In addition, his father, full of hatred towards him, forces him to search and have money. That's why we realize that this young man has no sense of belonging to his family. It is presented as belonging to a different breed than Sorel. He prefers to read instead of working, seeing, with his father and older siblings. In fact, it is in search of a new identity, a more familiar and beautiful place, more noble. In fact, according to the social classification, the Sorel family is considered a poor family, while their upbringing will help them draw an opposite path. It will forget its name and its poor origins to join the rich and one day, seminarian tutor, secretary, political emissary or even lieutenant. However, this escape and desire for change lead him inexorably to death: it is for him to die for who he really is. This reflects a revolutionary character. At the same time, this inner revolution appears at the end of the novel when he decides to kill Madame de R  nal. In addition, reading and his love for Napoleon, from the beginning of the novel, supported this revolution. In addition, from the first encounter with her lover until the last day, Julien's silence reigns. We point out the lack of response or behavior during dialogue with others. His behavioural and oral language clarifies the lack of communication and the main role of silence. This act indicates the refusal of communication or rejection of their behaviour as peasants. By his silent nature, he does not confess love or affection to Madame de R  nal. He stays silent. When he meets Mathilde, he declares his desires and dreams. He establishes a loving relationship with which Mathilde increasingly joins and particularly joins his brave and offensive character. During this relationship, we see the real aspects of Julien: the character full of revolution, energy and desires. All this just to achieve a single goal that is some title of nobility. However, at the end of his final days, his silence appears and brings him back to loneliness and death. This signals a curly structure of his character that begins and ends with silence returning the hero to his status as poor peasants. Through his experiences, Julien matures and becomes a grown man. He will be able to distinguish between the true and the false in terms of his romantic relationships. His last words announced before the fudge highlight this change and that courage. Closing his lecture on Red and Black
In conclusion, Stendhal's tragic ending accentuates the weakness of the main character, the fall of his goals and his social failure in contrast to the success of other heroes such as the success of Bel Ami de Maupassant.
Julien Sorel is considered on the one hand a hero, a brave young man who had goals to achieve against a suffocating society; and on the other hand an anti-hero who died after the failure of his dreams. Did you like this article? Test your Knowledge of French with our questionnaires (literature, poetry, theatre). Do not hesitate to review the methodology of the oral with our final methodology sheet. Here is an analysis (reading sheet) of Stendhal's red and black.
Henry Beyle publishes Le Rouge et Le Le 1830 under the pseud Of Stendhal. This novel with chronicle subtitles from 1830 marks Stendhal's desire to witness, through Julien Sorel's itinerary, a historical period: Restoration. It is a novel marked by the two main aesthetics of the 19th century: romanticism and realism.
Who is Stendhal?
Born in 1783, Henry Beyle embarked on a military career that allowed him to discover Italy. After Napoleon's defeat in 1814, he moved to Milan and began publishing under the pseud Of Stendhal. His best-known works are the novels Le Rouge et le Noir (1830) and La Chartreuse de Parma (1839) and his essay De L'amour (1822).
What is the publishing context of Red and Black?
In 1830, France emerged from the Restoration period under Louis XVIII (1815-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830) and entered a period of constitutional monarchy under Louis Philippe, king of the French. Stendhal, an admirer of Napoleon and who had a military career, hates the Restoration and the monarchy.
Le Rouge et le Noir is a testament to this historic transition through the itinerary of Julien Sorel, an individualistic and energetic figure who climbs the society ladder. How do I sum up red and black? Under the Restoration, the mayor of Verri  res M. de R  nal hired Julien Sorel, a sensitive, intellectual and ambitious young peasant, as the guardian of his children. But Julien and Mme de R  nal become lovers and their relationship becomes more difficult. Julien was forced to leave Verri  res and entered the great seminary of Besan  on to pursue an ecclesiastical career (the Black of the novel). The director of the seminary, Abbot Pirard, offered him to become secretary of the Marquis of the Mole. With an ambitious heart, Julien Sorel went to Paris, where he was introduced to high society and broke social codes by seducing Mathilde de La Mole, the marquis' daughter. Learning that Mathilde is pregnant, Le Marquis ennobles Julien who becomes the knight Sorel de la Vernaye (The Red of the Novel, which symbolizes the military career). Mrs. de R  nal, pushed by her confessor, wrote to the Marquis to denounce Julien's arrival. Furious, Julien buys a gun and returns to Verri  res to shoot Mme de R  nal. Imprisoned, he regains calm and touches on happiness by living his love with Mme de R  nal, who has only been injured, and who visits him regularly. Julien is guillotined and Madame de R  nal dies three days later kissing her children (see my linear reading of the Red and Black excerpt). You can also find here my detailed chapter summary in Red and Black: What are the important issues in red and black? The company of the Red and Black is a real journey into 19th-century society.
Julien Sorel's career, which scrupulously crossed all social strata during the Restoration, allowed Stendhal to analyze a society divided into echelons: Julien's original peasant environment, the provincial bourgeoisie embodied by M. de R  nal. and the Parisian aristocracy with the Marquis of La Mole. Each medium has its own very specific codes to which Julien begins. (See, for example, my linear reading of the incipit of Red and Black that reveals criticism of industrialization and collusion between economic and political powers). The hypocrisy of the clergy is depicted during Julien's visit to the Seminary of Besan  on, and the Congregation, a secret society that pulls the strings in the province, is strongly denounced. During the trial, Julien denounced a society that perpetuates social oppression by condemning him to death. (See my linear reading of Chapter 41 of Red and Black: Julien's speech to the jury)
The arrival and desire for success
At the beginning of the novel, Julien Sorel is a nineteen-year-old farmer, an admirer of Napoleon, who wants to succeed and conquer the world. (See analysis of Julien Sorel's portrait in Chapter 4 of Red and Black)
But neither the military career (the Reds) nor the ecclesiastical career (the blacks) fulfilled their ambitions. Discover a society divided into echelons, closed, hypocritical. To succeed in a world where everything is accounting, strategy and tactics, you must play a role, become a calculator, conquer women, corrupt yourself. Encouraged by extraordinary energy, he does not hesitate to break social norms by maintaining a relationship with Mme de R  nal and seducing Mathilde de La Mole. But that energy loses it. Torn between her desire for social ascent and her aspiration for the sublime, she precipitates her fall by shooting Ms. de R  nal. Love Love is a conquest for Julien and is always part of a struggle as Stendhal describes it in Chapter IX (he observed it as an enemy with whom he will have to fight). (See the analysis of Chapter 9 of Red and Black: The Conquest of the Hand). It is the self-esteem, ambition and desire for social ascent that drive the hero to conquer Mme de R  nal and Mathilde de La Mole. But the passion for love is gradually instilled in the souls of the characters until they are delivered to extreme and contradictory feelings, such as Julien, which goes from melancholy to whistles of irrational joy in M. de R  nal and leads to the most extreme violence at the end of the novel. It is only in prison that Julien, paradoxically, finds happiness in the sincerity of his love for the lady of R  nal. What are the peculiarities of Stendhal's writing? For Stendhal a novel is a mirror that walks a great way. To make his novel Red and Black a mirror of 19th-century society, Stendhal resorts to a realistic, sober and non-emininated writing that tries to erase itself in the face of the events described. Stendhal adopts an omniscient point of view that constantly juxtaposes external and inner views to better analyze the psychology of characters. During the first meeting between Julien and Mme de R  nal, for example, Stendhal makes us successively adopt the point of view of Mme de R  nal and Julien to bring to light the emotional intensity of the scene (see the analysis of the love encounter in chapter 6 of Red and Black). The narrator is absent from his story, by far. Through many incisions, the novel is invited, to remember that it has a hand in the fate of its characters (through possessive our hero for example), adopt an ironic distance towards them or hand the reader his literary theories (a novel is a mirror that walks down a great path.). What does travel mean: The character of the novel, aesthetics and values? The journey associated with this novel in the context of French bac 2020 is: the character of the novel, aesthetics and values. To understand this journey, it must be understood that the characters in the novels generally embed values and an era. Julien is a highly individualized character: he is complex, singular and has his own motivations that make him an individual in his own right. But behind this singularity, Julien Sorel embodies the two aesthetics and values that reflect the 19th century: romanticism and realism.
Julien Sorel, a romantic character in Julien Sorel's character. is part of the romantic trend. He is always a mobile and nomomatic character who moves from the province to Paris, from Madame de R  nal to Mathilde de la Mole. As a romantic poet, he is happy to find himself alone on the mountain in chapter XII (and I am free!). Similarly, he finds happiness in the loneliness of prison. He is a young, vigorous, passionate character who enters the prosaic and bourgeois world of money and social success. This painful confrontation between their aspirations and their reality reflects the evil of the century, this evil of living romantics born of lost disappointments and illusions.
Julien Sorel, a realistic novel character
But Julien Sorel remains a realistic novel character. He is the witness character who carries the mirror that is the novel. On your initiation journey, he crosses symbolic places and social classes, moves from the rural province to the provincial city and then to Paris and goes so far as to change his identity by calling himself not Julien Sorel but Julien Sorel de la Vernaye (as if his identity was shaped by the social universes in which he is immersed). Stendhal thus studies the effects of society on his character. The character of the novel becomes the experimental object of the novelist who places his character in society (as an animal would be put in a laboratory) to observe its evolution. The possessive our hero, recurring in the novel, shows Stendhal's tender and ironic gaze on the character he is studying. Are you studying Red and Black? Also watch:
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   Lorenzaccio, Musset: abstract
   The Lake, Lamartine: analysis
   Cyrano de Bergerac: summary
   Sadness, Musset (analysis)
   Romanticism: the questionnaire
   El Desdichado, Nerval (commentary)
   Victor Hugo [author]

