Les Miserables is a novel by Victor Hugo that was first published in 1862. Set in the early 19th century, the novel tells the story of ex-convict Jean Valjean and his struggle to rebuild his life and find redemption. The novel is a commentary on French society, politics, and the human condition.

The story begins with Valjean being released from prison after serving 19 years for stealing a loaf of bread. He is unable to find work due to his status as a convict, and has to start begging to survive. Eventually he is taken in by a bishop, who learns him a lot. This kindness changes Valjean’s life completely. He manages to become a successful businessman and the mayor of a small town. However, during the story he is constantly pursued by the relentless police inspector Javert: a man who is determined to bring him to justice.

In addition to Valjean’s tale, we also learn about other characters and their lives. These include Fantine, a single mother who is forced into prostitution to provide for her daughter Cosette; Marius, a young revolutionary who falls in love with Cosette; and the street urchin Gavroche. This last character is meant to represent the hard life that the poor and helpless live.

Les Miserables is not just an ordinary novel, and it contains many themes. A central example is the struggle for social justice, as Hugo explores the harsh realities of poverty and the inequities of French society. He also examines the natures of law and justice, and how they can be used to both oppress and liberate individuals.

Another topic in the book is the power of love and compassion, as seen in the relationship between Valjean and Cosette, and the acts of kindness shown by the bishop and other characters. Hugo also explores the idea of redemption, and how people can change and find forgiveness even after committing terrible acts.

The novel also examines the role of religion and spirituality, which can be seen in the bishop's teachings. Throughout the book, Hugo questions the hypocrisy of religious institutions and the value of true faith and compassion.

Finally, Les Miserables is a commentary on the human condition and the struggle for meaning and purpose in life. Hugo portrays characters who are complex and flawed, and who grapple with issues such as mortality, morality, and the search for identity and belonging.

Overall, Les Miserables is a rich and powerful novel that explores some of the most fundamental questions of human existence. Its themes of social justice, love and compassion, redemption, spirituality, and the human condition continue to resonate with readers today.