

Red Highlight: Poor Social Class People and Places

Green Highlight: Rich Social Class People and Places

Blue Highlight: Grenouille's Description of Human Scent

Purple Highlight: Church

Smelly **places**, smelly **people**:

- Cimetière des Innocents, which housed 800 years' worth of bodies from the surrounding parishes and hospitals, stank the worst; fish market next to it (Chapter 1)
- "In the period of which we speak, there reigned in the cities a stench barely conceivable to us modern men and women. The streets stank of manure, the courtyards of urine, the stairwells stank of moldering wood and rat droppings, the kitchens of spoiled cabbage and mutton fat; the unaired parlors stank of stale dust, the bedrooms of greasy sheets, damp featherbeds, and the pungently sweet aroma of chamber pots. The stench of sulfur rose from the chimneys, the stench of caustic lyes from the tanneries, and from the slaughterhouses came the stench of congealed blood. People stank of sweat and unwashed clothes; from their mouths came the stench of rotting teeth, from their bellies that of onions, and from their bodies, if they were no longer very young, came the stench of rancid cheese and sour milk and tumorous disease. The rivers stank, the marketplaces stank, the churches stank, it stank beneath the bridges and in the palaces. The peasant stank as did the priest, the apprentice as did his master's wife, the whole of the aristocracy stank, even the king himself stank, stank like a rank lion, and the queen like an old goat, summer and winter. For in the eighteenth century there was nothing to hinder bacteria busy at decomposition, and so there was no human activity, either constructive or destructive, no manifestation of germinating or decaying life that was not

accompanied by stench. And of course the stench was foulest in Paris, for Paris was the largest city of France. And in turn there was a spot in Paris under the sway of a particularly fiendish stench: between the rue aux Fers and the rue de la Ferronnerie, the Cimetiere des Innocents to be exact. For eight hundred years the dead had been brought here from the Hotel-Dieu and from the surrounding parish churches, for eight hundred years, day in, day out, corpses by the dozens had been carted here and tossed into long ditches, stacked bone upon bone for eight hundred years in the tombs and charnel houses. Only later—on the eve of the Revolution, after several of the grave pits had caved in and the stench had driven the swollen graveyard's neighbors to more than mere protest and to actual insurrection—was it finally closed and abandoned. Millions of bones and skulls were shoveled into the catacombs of Montmartre and in its place a food market was erected” (3).

- cloister: priest and wet nurse (Chapter 1–2)
 - “Slowly he straightened up, and as he did he breathed the scent of milk and cheesy wool exuded by the wet nurse. It was a pleasant aroma ... And once again he inhaled deeply of the warm vapors streaming from the wet nurse” (5).
 - “With that he grabbed the basket, took one last whiff of that fleeting woolly, warm milkiness, and slammed the door” (7).
- Father Terrier thinks that Jeanne Bussie is very wrong in her assessment of Grenouille, particularly since she came to her conclusion with her nose. He believes this is a nod to primitive paganism (which believed in smelling blood and offering stinky sacrifices to the gods) and not rooted in Christian reason → the reader is again reminded of Jeanne Bussie's social standing, as she too is compared to the “primitive paganism” that so irritates Father Terrier (Chapter 3)

- “But on the other hand, it was clear as day that when a simple soul like that wet nurse maintained that she had spotted a devilish spirit, the devil himself could not possibly have a hand in it. The very fact that she thought she had spotted him was certain proof that there was nothing devilish to be found, for the devil would certainly never be stupid enough to let himself be unmasked by the wet nurse Jeanne Bussie. And with her nose no less! With the primitive organ of smell, the basest of the senses! As if hell smelled of sulfur and paradise of incense and myrrh! The worst sort of superstition, straight out of the darkest days of paganism, when people still lived like beasts, possessing no keenness of the eye, incapable of distinguishing colors, but presuming to be able to smell blood, to scent the difference between friend and foe, to be smelled out by cannibal giants and werewolves and the Furies, all the while offering their ghastly gods stinking, smoking burnt sacrifices. How repulsive! ‘The fool sees with his nose’ rather than his eyes, they say, and apparently the light of God-given reason would have to shine yet another thousand years before the last remnants of such primitive beliefs were banished” (7).

- **Father Terrier**

- “And all at once he felt as if he stank, of sweat and vinegar, of choucroute and unwashed clothes” (7).

- **Grenouille** is sent to a **tanner** (Chapter 6)

- “From his first glance at Monsieur Grimal—no, from the first breath that sniffed in the odor enveloping Grimal—Grenouille knew that this man was capable of thrashing him to death for the least infraction. His life was worth precisely as much as the work he could accomplish and consisted only of whatever utility Grimal ascribed to it” (14)

- Grenouille explores the city (Chapter 6)

- “It was a mixture of human and animal smells, of water and stone and ashes and leather, of soap and fresh-baked bread and eggs boiled in vinegar, of noodles and smoothly polished brass, of sage and ale and tears, of grease and soggy straw and dry straw. Thousands upon thousands of odors formed an invisible gruel that filled the street ravines, only seldom evaporating above the rooftops and never from the ground below. The people who lived there no longer experienced this gruel as a special smell; it had arisen from them and they had been steeped in it over and over again; it was, after all, the very air they breathed and from which they lived, it was like clothes you have worn so long you no longer smell them or feel them against your skin” (15)
- “When he had smelled his fill of the thick gruel of the streets, he would go to airier terrain, where the odors were thinner, mixing with the wind as they unfurled, much as perfume does—to the market of Les Halles, for instance, where the odors of the day lived on into the evening, invisibly but ever so distinctly, as if the vendors still swarmed among the crowd, as if the baskets still stood there stuffed full of vegetables and eggs, or the casks full of wine and vinegar, the sacks with their spices and potatoes and flour, the crates of nails and screws, the meat tables, the tables full of doth and dishes and shoe soles and all the hundreds of other things sold there during the day... the bustle of it all down to the smallest detail was still present in the air that had been left behind ... Or he would go to the spot where they had beheaded his mother, to the place de Greve, which stuck out to lick the river like a huge tongue. Here lay the ships, pulled up onto shore or moored to posts, and they smelled of coal and grain and hay and damp ropes” (15)

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- When Grenouille exhausts the smells of his neighbouring quarters, he expands and begins exploring the other side of the river, where rich people live. This is where Grenouille first smells perfume (Chapter 7)
 - “And so he expanded his hunting grounds, first westward to the Faubourg Saint-Honore, then out along the rue Saint-Antoine to the Bastille, and finally across to the other bank of the river into the quarters of the Sorbonne and the Faubourg Saint-Germain where the rich people lived. Through the wrought-iron gates at their portals came the smells of coach leather and of the powder in the pages’ wigs, and over the high walls passed the garden odors of broom and roses and freshly trimmed hedges. It was here as well that Grenouille first smelled perfume in the literal sense of the word: a simple lavender or rose water, with which the fountains of the gardens were filled on gala occasions; but also the more complex, more costly scents, of tincture of musk mixed with oils of neroli and tuberose, jonquil, jasmine, or cinnamon, that floated behind the carriages like rich ribbons on the evening breeze” (16).
 - Grenouille catches the smell of a girl, he’s confused, as he knows humans to smell repulsive. He kills her and is inspired as he has “possessed her smell” (Chapter 8)
 - “The odor came rolling down the rue de Seine like a ribbon, unmistakably clear, and yet as before very delicate and very fine. ... This scent had a freshness, but not the freshness of limes or pomegranates, not the freshness of myrrh or cinnamon bark or curly mint or birch or camphor or pine needles, nor that of a May rain or a frosty wind or of well water... and at the same time it

had warmth, but not as bergamot, cypress, or musk has, or jasmine or daffodils, not as rosewood has or iris... This scent was a blend of both, of evanescence and substance, not a blend, but a unity, although slight and frail as well, and yet solid and sustaining, like a piece of thin, shimmering silk... and yet again not like silk, but like pastry soaked in honeysweet milk—and try as he would he couldn't fit those two together: milk and silk!" (17).

- "The street smelled of its usual smells: water, feces, rats, and vegetable matter" (17).
- "Normally human odor was nothing special, or it was ghastly. Children smelled insipid, men urinous, all sour sweat and cheese, women smelled of rancid fat and rotting fish" (18).
- "And now he smelled that this was a human being, smelled the sweat of her armpits, the oil in her hair, the fishy odor of her genitals, and smelled it all with the greatest pleasure. Her sweat smelled as fresh as the sea breeze, the tallow of her hair as sweet as nut oil, her genitals were as fragrant as the bouquet of water lilies, her skin as apricot blossoms..." (18).
- Baldini wishes for the strict old guild laws, which would punish Pélissier, who isn't even a trained perfumer. Baldini continues his mental rant and considers the history of perfume, where originally a perfumer had to be fluent in Latin and able to perform many different tasks related to the creation of perfume and cosmetics. However, once it was discovered how to bind scent to alcohol, the craft began to slip from the grasp of masters and into the hands of anyone, like Pélissier (Chapter 11)
 - "What did people need with a new perfume every season? Was that necessary? The public had been very content before with violet cologne and simple floral bouquets that you changed a soupçon every ten years or so. For thousands of

years people had made do with incense and myrrh, a few balms, oils, and dried aromatic herbs. And even once they had learned to use retorts and alembics for distilling herbs, flowers, and woods and stealing the aromatic base of their vapors in the form of volatile oils, to crush seeds and pits and fruit rinds in oak presses, and to extract the scent from petals with carefully filtered oils—even then, the number of perfumes had been modest. In those days a figure like Pelissier would have been an impossibility, for back then just for the production of a simple pomade you needed abilities of which this vinegar mixer could not even dream” (22–23).

- Grenouille wants to work with Baldini (Chapter 14)
 - “There were nine altogether: essence of orange blossom, lime oil, attars of rose and clove, extracts of jasmine, bergamot, and rosemary, musk tincture, and storax balm, all quickly plucked down and set at the ready on the edge of the table. The last item he lugged over was a demijohn full of high-proof rectified spirit” (32).
- Grenouille works for Baldini, creates great perfumes; he is aware that to accomplish his personal creative goals, he has to work within the existing system of society (Chapter 17)
 - “And so he gladly let himself be instructed in the arts of making soap from lard, sewing gloves of chamois, mixing powders from wheat flour and almond bran and pulverized violet roots. Rolled scented candles made of charcoal, saltpeter, and sandalwood chips. Pressed Oriental pastilles of myrrh, benzoin, and powdered amber. Kneaded frankincense, shellac, vetiver, and cinnamon into balls of incense. Sifted and spatulated poudre imperiale out of crushed rose petals, lavender flowers, cascarilla bark. Stirred face paints, whites and

vein blues, and molded greasy sticks of carmine for the lips. Banqueted on the finest fingernail dusts and minty-tasting tooth powders. Mixed liquids for curling periwigs and wart drops for corns, bleaches to remove freckles from the complexion and nightshade extract for the eyes, Spanish fly for the gentlemen and hygienic vinegars for the ladies...” (38).

- Grenouille explores his inner fortress of smells (Chapter 26)
 - “To enhance the mood, he first conjured up those that were earliest and most remote: the hostile, steaming vapors of Madame Gaillard’s bedroom; the bone-dry, leathery bouquet of her hands; the vinegary breath of Father Terrier; the hysterical, hot maternal sweat of Bussie the wet nurse; the carrion stench of the Cimetiere des Innocents; the homicidal odor of his mother ... Sometimes, if this repulsive aperitif did not quite get him into stride, he would allow himself a brief, odoriferous detour to Grimal’s for a whiff of the stench of raw, meaty skins and tanning broths, or he imagined the collective effluvium of six hundred thousand Parisians in the sultry, oppressive heat of late summer” (49).
- Grenouille gets a makeover (Chapter 30)
 - “He inhaled the air that rose up from his own body and smelled the bad perfume and the velvet and the freshly glued leather of his shoes; he smelled the silk cloth, the powder, the makeup, the light scent of the soap from Potosi” (57).

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- Grenouille constructs the scent of a human being (Chapter 31)

- "The customary essences of neroli, eucalyptus, and cypress were meant only as a cover for the actual scent that he intended to produce: that was the scent of humanness. He wanted to acquire the human-being odor—if only in the form of an inferior temporary surrogate—that he did not possess himself. True, the odor of human being did not exist, any more than the human countenance. Every human being smelled different, no one knew that better than Grenouille, who recognized thousands upon thousands of individual odors and could sniff out the difference of each human being from birth on. And yet—there was a basic perfumatory theme to the odor of humanity, a rather simple one, by the way: a sweaty-oily, sour-cheesy, quite richly repulsive basic theme that clung to all humans equally and above which each individual's aura hovered only as a small cloud of more refined particularity. ... And to imitate this human odor—quite unsatisfactorily, as he himself knew, but cleverly enough to deceive others—Grenouille gathered up the most striking ingredients in Runel's workshop. There was a little pile of cat shit behind the threshold of the door leading out to the courtyard, still rather fresh. He took a half teaspoon of it and placed it together with several drops of vinegar and finely ground salt in a mixing bottle. Under the worktable he found a thumbnail-sized piece of cheese, apparently from one of Runel's lunches. It was already quite old, had begun to decompose, and gave off a biting, pungent odor. From the lid of a sardine tub that stood at the back of the shop, he scratched off a rancid, fishy something-or-other, mixed it with rotten egg and castoreum, ammonia, nutmeg, horn shavings, and singed pork rind, finely ground. To this he added a relatively large amount of civet, mixed these ghastly ingredients with alcohol, let it digest, and filtered it into a second bottle. The bilge smelled revolting. Its

stink was putrid, like a sewer, and if you fanned its vapor just once to mix it with fresh air, it was as if you were standing in Paris on a hot summer day, at the corner of the rue aux Fers and the rue de la Lingerie, where the odors from Les Halles, the Cimetiere des Innocents, and the overcrowded tenements converged. On top of this disgusting base, which smelled more like a cadaver than a human being, Grenouille spread a layer of fresh, oily scents: peppermint, lavender, turpentine, lime, eucalyptus, which he then simultaneously disguised and tamed with the pleasant bouquet of fine floral oils-geranium, rose, orange blossom, and jasmine. After a second dilution with alcohol and a splash of vinegar there was nothing left of the disgusting basic odor on which the mixture was built. The latent stench lay lost and unnoticeable under the fresh ingredients; the nauseous part, pampered by the scent of flowers, had become almost interesting; and, strangely enough, there was no putrefaction left to smell, not the least. On the contrary, the perfume seemed to exhale the robust, vivacious scent of life” (59).

- Inhaling the incense in the church, Grenouille thinks that God stinks and is either being swindled, as his incense in the church isn't pure, or is a swindler just like Grenouille is (Chapter 32)
 - “He sat there for a while, with an air of devout tranquillity, and took deep breaths, inhaling the incense-laden air. And yet another cheerful grin crossed his face. How miserable this God smelled! How ridiculously bad the scent that this God let spill from Him. It was not even genuine frankincense fuming up out of those thuribles. A bad substitute, adulterated with linden and cinnamon dust and saltpeter. God stank. God was a poor little stinker. He had been

swindled, this God had, or was Himself a swindler, no different from Grenouille—only a considerably worse one!” (61).

- Grenouille makes new human scents (Chapter 38)
 - “First he made an odor for inconspicuousness, a mousy, workaday outfit of odors with the sour, cheesy smell of humankind still present, but only as if exuded into the outside world through a layer of linen and wool garments covering an old man’s dry skin. Bearing this smell, he could move easily among people. The perfume was robust enough to establish the olfactory existence of a human being, but at the same time so discreet that it bothered no one” (71).
 - “For such occasions he had blended a somewhat more redolent, slightly sweaty perfume, one with a few olfactory edges and hooks, that lent him a coarser appearance and made people believe he was in hurry and on urgent business. He also had good success with a deceptive imitation of Druot’s aura seminalis, which he learned to produce by impregnating a piece of oily linen with a paste of fresh duck eggs and fermented wheat flour and used whenever he needed to arouse a certain amount of notice” (71).
 - “Another perfume in his arsenal was a scent for arousing sympathy that proved effective with middle-aged and elderly women. It smelled of watery milk and fresh, soft wood. The effect Grenouille created with it—even when he went out unshaved, scowling, and wrapped in a heavy coat—was of a poor, pale lad in a frayed jacket who simply had to be helped. Once they caught a whiff of him, the market women filled his pockets with nuts and dried pears because he seemed to them so hungry and helpless. And the butcher’s wife, an implacable callous old hag if there ever was one, let him pick out, for free,

smelly old scraps of meat and bone, for his odor of innocence touched her mother's heart. He then took these scraps, digested them directly in alcohol, and used them as the main component for an odor that he applied when he wanted to be avoided and left completely alone. It surrounded him with a slightly nauseating aura, like the rancid breath of an old slattery's mouth when she awakens. It was so effective that even Druot, hardly a squeamish sort, would automatically turn aside and go in search of fresh air, without any clear knowledge, of course, of what had actually driven him away. And sprinkling a few drops of the repellent on the threshold of his cabin was enough to keep every intruder, human or animal, at a distance" (71).

- "A similar mass aura, though purer and more sublimely sweaty, could be gleaned from the cathedral, where on December 24 Grenouille hung his experimental flags under the pews and gathered them in again on the twenty-sixth, after no less than seven masses had been sat through just above them. A ghastly conglomerate of odor was reproduced on the impregnated swatches: anal sweat, menstrual blood, moist hollows of knees, and clenched hands, mixed with the exhaled breath of thousands of hymn-singing and Ave Maria-mumbling throats and the oppressive fumes of incense and myrrh. A horrible concentration of nebulous, amorphous, nauseating odors—and yet unmistakably human" (73).
- "He remembered the stations of his life, from Madame Gaillard's house and the moist, warm woodpile in front of it to his journey today to the little village of La Napoule, which smelled like fish. He thought of Grimal the tanner, of Giuseppe Baldini, of the marquis de La Taillade-Espinasse. He thought of the city of Paris, of its great effluvium, that evil smell of a thousand iridescences;

he thought of the redheaded girl in the rue des Marais, of open country, of the spare wind, of forests” (85)

Grenouille in grasse:

“he closed his eyes and concentrated on the odors that came floating to him from the building across the way. There were the odors of the kegs, vinegar and wine... then the odors of wealth that the walls exuded like a fine goldensweet... The scents of the garden descended upon him, their contours as precise and clear the colored bands of a rainbow.”