

# “Money is life”

*by* Jared Wasserman

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Hook reader. How about this for an opening sentence? Balzac is the type of author who could have worked for H&R Block. Your opening sentence is stronger if you included outside research into Balzac's debts, and then segued into how this theme plays out in *Honoré de Balzac's* life experiences with money seem to have filtered into to his novel,

*Pere Goriot*. Perhaps his own history of constantly being in debt played a role in the use of money and the costs associated with everything from boarding, to clothes and ultimately to death. Throughout the book, Balzac constantly references the exact costs of things and the impact that money has on one's ability to enter society. The preoccupation of money and its pervasive influence on every aspect of society can be seen through his constant mention of specific numerical amounts for everything ranging from the cost of boarding to the price of a burial. For Balzac, as well as Goriot, "Money is life" (210).

In the opening of *Pere Goriot*, Balzac focuses on the finances of the boarding house by denoting specific costs associated with boarding at the Maison Vauquer and shows that even in poor conditions, there is still a stratification of people based on money. Money is the definition

of life and how you are treated in *Pere Goriot*. Even in the lower echelons of Parisian society - the dilapidated boarding house - there is still a social hierarchy based on money. In this boarding

house, the richer of the poor live on lower floors with more expensive rooms - Madame Couture and Victorine Taillefer "paid eighteen hundred for francs board and lodging" (7). Whereas, the poorer of the poor live on higher floors with cheaper rooms: the third floor apartments cost

"forty-five francs a month for board and lodging" (7). The stratification of the boarders based on

money shows the omnipresence of money in Parisian society. In addition to money's effect on rooming, money also affects how you are treated in the boarding house: "These seven boarders

Yes, but can you go beyond just discussing rent charges? There are numerous other financial dealings in the boarding house.

were Madame Vauquer's spoilt children and the attention and respect she accorded them was calculated with the accuracy of an astronomer according to the amount they paid for their board"

*Why not elaborate on Madame Vauquer? She's a great character and there's some great material about her approach to money.*

(8). The true importance of money in one's life can be seen through the difference in treatment that one receives. The boarders are all of the lower class, yet they are treated differently by

Madame Vauquer based on how much money they pay in comparison to the other boarders.

*Focus on Vautrin and how he gives Eugene an in-depth accounting of what it costs to survive in high society. Balzac uses specific amounts of money to describe register ringing during his speech!*

Balzac uses specific amounts of money to describe what it takes to enter the upper echelons of Parisian society. Money is what defines one's entrance into high society as you need money for all sorts of expenses. Clothing, an important expense, is an extremely important part of entering high society: Balzac writes that a tailor is the "link between young men's present and future" (87). A tailor can be quite expensive, costing "Fifteen hundred francs" (87), yet the expensive cost of clothing is only a single part of what one needs to enter high society. Vautrin

*Yes!*

lists the exact expenses of the upper echelons of Parisian society:

If you want to cut a figure in Paris, you must have three horses and a tilbury for the daytime, and a brougham for the evening; making a total of nine thousand francs for your carriages. You would be unworthy of your destiny if you did not spend three thousand francs at your tailor's, six hundred at the perfumer's, three hundred at the bootmaker's and three hundred at the hatter's. As for your laundress, she'll cost you a thousand. . . . That comes to fourteen thousand. . . . Add to these basic necessities six thousand francs for rations, a thousand for a billet. So, my boy, we need to raise a cool twenty-five thousand a year to meet expenses, or we land in the gutter. . . . (139-140)

*Typically I'm not a big fan of block quotes, but this is is a pretty*

*important speech, so OK!*

Rather than just saying that you need a lot of money to enter high society, Balzac gives the exact figures to show just how much it really takes. These striking and explicit expenses - the horses,

the tilbury, the tailor's, the perfumer's, the bootmaker's - highlight the importance of money in high society. Through Vautrin's speech to Eugene, it is clear that in order to **make**, one needs at least "twenty-five thousand a year" (140). In addition to the literal necessity of money, Balzac also writes having money gives one confidence: "The moment money slips into a student's pocket, an imaginary pillar rises within him to give him support. He walks more briskly than before, he feels that he has a firm case from which to exert pressure, he looks people full and straight in the eye, he moves more nimbly" (88). The confidence money gives one is an important aspect of one's entrance into high Parisian society.



Good analysis!

Good point!

Even when Goriot is on his deathbed, it is money that controls the ultimate send off he can have, as if even in death, money is what matters. While on his deathbed, all Goriot can think about is money. He is upset because he didn't have enough money to buy his daughter a dress: "I felt so humiliated at not having the twelve thousand francs yesterday that I would have given the rest of my miserable life to make up for the failure" (229). In the midst of dying, Goriot also thinks about how he "pledged a year's annuity to Papa Gobseck in return for four hundred francs cash down" (229). On his deathbed, all Goriot can seem to think about is money. Even when you are dying, you cannot escape the overbearing presence of money. In addition to Goriot thinking about money while on his deathbed, money plays a role in his funeral. Even a funeral in Paris is expensive. With very limited funds for the funeral, "There were not even black hangings at the door. It was a pauper's funeral, without ceremony, mourners, friends or family" (261). With the little money they had, Bianchon had to purchase a discounted coffin. In addition, the priests gave limited prayers since they that's all that could be paid for: "The two priests, the server and the verger came in and gave their seventy francs' worth, this at a time when the church is not rich

Good textual

enough to offer prayers without payment" (262). When it was time to tip the gravediggers, Eugene didn't have any money left so had to borrow money from Christophe - a servant. Money will be an important part of one's life to the very end, so in *Pere Goriot*, "Money is life" (210). *If allotted more time I would write more about the costs at the funeral and their significance.* *Great, that works nicely.*

*Jared, this paper has a lot of potential. Lots of excellent textual evidence and commentary here. The boarding house section needs more good examples. Keep striving for greatness. Looking forward to seeing how this develops.*

# "Money is life"

## GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

/0

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

PAGE 1

**Text Comment.** Hook reader. How about this for an opening sentence? Balzac is the type of author who could have worked for H&R Block. Your opening would be stronger if you included outside research into Balzac's debts, and then segued into how this theme plays out in the novel.



### Comment 1

Proofread.



### Comment 2

Clarify, reword this.



### Vague

Unclear:

When making a point in one of your body paragraphs, one of the most common mistakes is to not offer enough details. A paragraph without much detail will seem vague and sketchy. A paper is always strengthened when your claims are as specific as possible. The more detailed evidence you offer, the more reference points your reader will have. Remember that you are communicating your argument to a reader who has only your description to go by. Someone who reads your essay will not automatically know what you mean to express, so you have to supply details, to show the reader what you mean, not just tell him or her.



### Comment 3

with



### Comment 4

Whose? The novel's? Balzac's?

**Text Comment.** I like this, though you said it before. So change up the earlier reference.



### Comment 5

Avoid generalizing about the author.

You could say: For Balzac's characters...

QM

## **GREAT POINT!**

GREAT POINT!

QM

## **Repetitive**

Repetitive

### ***Additional Comment***

Some nice vocab here, but you said this two sentences ago.

QM

## **Awk.**

Awkward:

The expression or construction is cumbersome or difficult to read. Consider rewriting.

QM

## **Improper quote integration.**

Improper quote integration.

QM

## **Fragment**

Sentence Fragment--add subject or verb



## **Comment 6**

their monthly rent



## **Comment 7**

Avoid personal pronouns.

**Text Comment.** Yes, but can you go beyond just discussing rent charges? There are numerous other financial dealings in the boarding house.

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**Text Comment.** Why not elaborate on Madame Vauquer? She's a great character and there's some great material about her approach to money.

**Text Comment.** Focus on Vautrin and how he gives Eugene an in-depth accounting of what it costs to survive in high society. Add context. You can almost hear the cash register ringing during his speech!

**Text Comment.** Yes!

**Text Comment.** Typically I'm not a big fan of block quotes, but this is is a pretty important speech, so OK!

PAGE 3

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### Comment 8

to make it in high society



### Good analysis!

Good analysis!



### Good point!

Good point!



### Good textual evidence!

Good textual evidence!

PAGE 4

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**Text Comment.** Great, that works nicely.

**Text Comment.** Jared, this paper has a lot of potential. Lots of excellent textual evidence and commentary here. The boarding house section needs more good examples. Keep striving for greatness. Looking forward to seeing how this develops.