

ABOUT VICTOR HUGO

Hugo was a moderate republican who was made a Peer of France in 1845. After the Revolution of 1848 and the founding of the Second Republic, he was elected a deputy to the Constitutional Assembly. Three years later, when Louis Napoleon abolished the Republic and reestablished the Empire, Hugo risked execution trying to rally the workers of Paris against the new Emperor. However, his efforts failed, and he had to escape to Brussels.

As a result, Hugo spent the next decade in exile with his family and Mme. Drouet on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey. During these years, he wrote satires about Louis

Napoleon, returned to his poetry and published several novels including *Les Misérables*, which he had begun years earlier.

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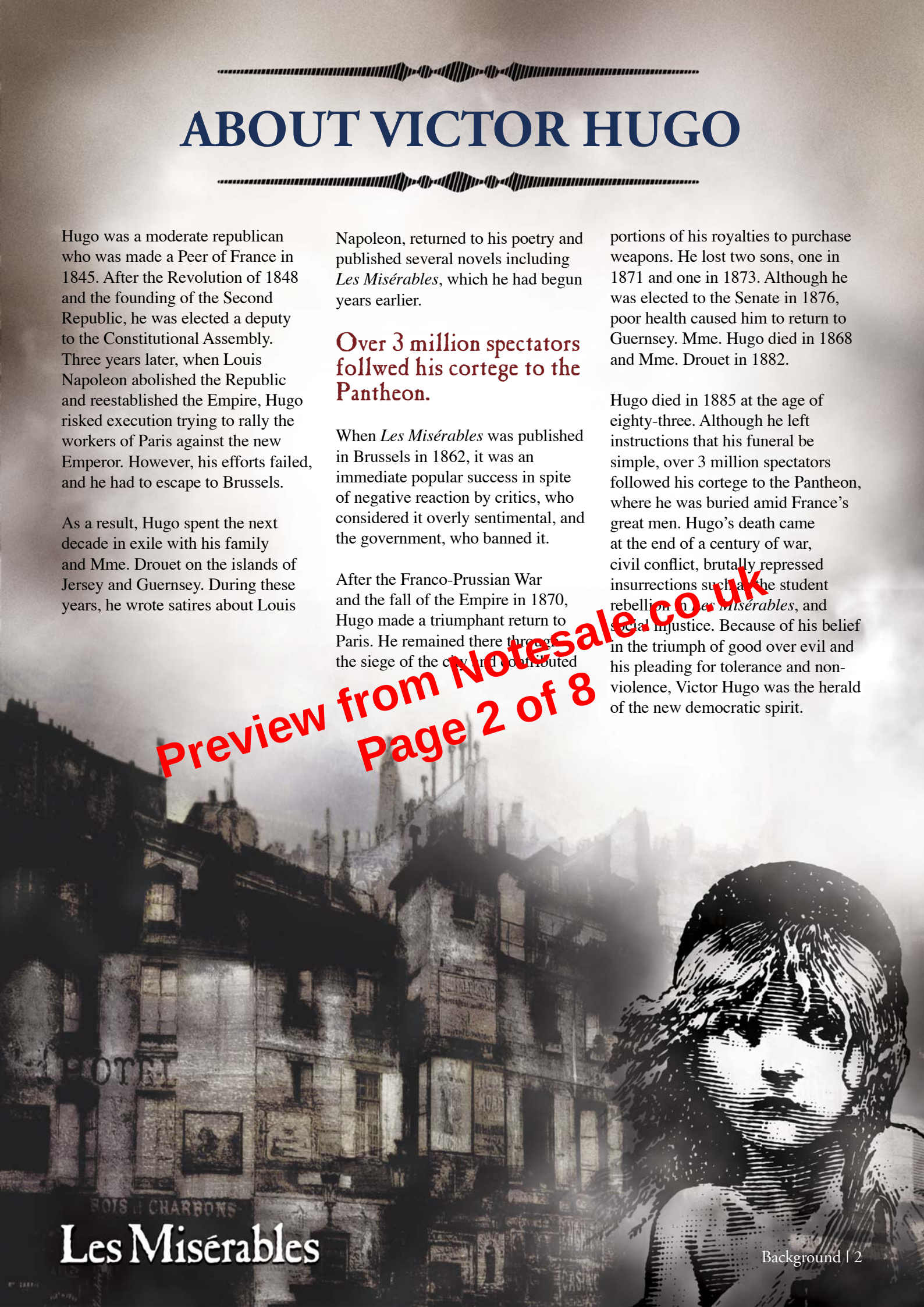
When *Les Misérables* was published in Brussels in 1862, it was an immediate popular success in spite of negative reaction by critics, who considered it overly sentimental, and the government, who banned it.

After the Franco-Prussian War and the fall of the Empire in 1870, Hugo made a triumphant return to Paris. He remained there through the siege of the city and contributed

portions of his royalties to purchase weapons. He lost two sons, one in 1871 and one in 1873. Although he was elected to the Senate in 1876, poor health caused him to return to Guernsey. Mme. Hugo died in 1868 and Mme. Drouet in 1882.

Hugo died in 1885 at the age of eighty-three. Although he left instructions that his funeral be simple, over 3 million spectators followed his cortege to the Pantheon, where he was buried amid France's great men. Hugo's death came at the end of a century of war, civil conflict, brutally repressed insurrections such as the student rebellion in *Les Misérables*, and social injustice. Because of his belief in the triumph of good over evil and his pleading for tolerance and non-violence, Victor Hugo was the herald of the new democratic spirit.

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Les Misérables