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The Red and the Black

Stendhal · *1830* · *Horace B. Samuel*

In the little town of Verrières, a carpenter's clever son means to rise by the church, since the army's red is no longer the open road. Julien Sorel loves, calculates, shoots, and goes to the scaffold. This is Horace B. Samuel's English of 1916, a Chronicle of 1830.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Can a young man make a soul out of ambition, and what is left when love and the will to rise have led him to a crime?

"The little town of Verrières can pass for one of the prettiest in Franche-Comté."

The opening of the novel

The pretty town is a world of money, party, and watching eyes. Julien, a tutor in the house of M. de Rênal, uses the pose of a young priest as a career 'which may lead to anything,' and falls into a real passion with Madame de Rênal. Later, in Paris, Mathilde de la Mole offers another kind of pride. A letter, a church, a pistol, and a trial end the climb. Samuel's English is the hosted text (PG #44747). Quote it, including the circumflex in Rênal and the spelling of Verrières. This is not Ellison, and it is not a simple romance. It is a study of hypocrisy, class, and a soul at war with itself, for older students.

KEY CHARACTERS

Julien Sorel
The carpenter's son whose ambition, pride, and capacity for love drive the book.

Madame de Rênal
The mayor's wife, whose love is more honest than Julien's first plans.

Mathilde de la Mole
The proud Parisian who loves him as a test of her own courage.

M. de Rênal and the de la Mole world
The provincial and Paris powers through which a poor young man tries to rise.

A PRETTY TOWN

> *"The little town of Verrières can pass for one of the prettiest in Franche-Comté."*
>
> The opening of the novel

Grades 11–12

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Verrières

BOOK I, THE OPENING

A pretty town in Franche-Comté, a mayor who is a man of substance, and a carpenter's son who reads and hates his station.

- The first sentence is this text's wording: Verrières, Franche-Comté.
- The 'red' and the 'black' are the army and the church as roads of advancement after the Empire.
- Julien's Latin and his Napoleon-worship are already a hidden life.

> *"The little town of Verrières can pass for one of the prettiest in Franche-Comté."*
>
> The opening of the novel

02

The Rênal House

THE FIRST LOVE

Julien becomes tutor to the mayor's children. Madame de Rênal, still young, loves him; he loves, and also measures his success.

- The name is Madame de Rênal (circumflex) in Samuel.
- The passion is real and also a campaign; keep both facts in view.
- A young priest's career and a married woman's soul are both at stake.

03

The Black Career

THE SEMINARY AND THE TURN TO PARIS

Scandal and strategy send him toward the church's road. He learns a colder hypocrisy than Verrières required.

- Stendhal is exact about provincial and Parisian lying.
- Julien's hatred of eating with servants is not a simple pride.
- The seminary is a school of masks.

04

Mathilde de la Mole

BOOK II, PARIS

In the de la Mole household, Mathilde's pride answers Julien's. Love here is a contest of courage and humiliation.

- Do not flatten Mathilde into a mere second romance.
- Paris society is another Verrières, dressed more finely.
- A letter from the past will destroy the new fortune.

05

A Shot, and a Scaffold

THE CLOSE

Julien returns to Verrières and fires in a church. The trial, the prison, and the end strip him of the career and leave a last accounting with Madame de Rênal and with himself.

- The crime is not an accident of plot; it is the book's moral crisis.
- Quote Samuel, not a later English, at the end as at the beginning.
- This is Adult/Advanced: adultery, attempted murder, an execution. Teach it as a soul's history, not a scandal sheet.

Ambition | Hypocrisy | Love and Pride | Class | A Soul on Trial

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. The hosted text is Horace B. Samuel's 1916 English (Project Gutenberg #44747), subtitled A Chronicle of 1830. Quote Samuel, not a later translation. Names are Madame de Rênal (circumflex) and Verrières.
2. This is Stendhal's 1830 novel, not Ralph Ellison, and not a simple love story. Julien's church career is a chosen road of advancement after the Empire ('the red and the black' as army and cassock).
3. The book contains adultery, a shooting in a church, a trial, and an execution. It is for older students. Do not quote the translator's or critic's front matter as if it were the novel.

Quotations are verbatim from the Horace B. Samuel, Project Gutenberg #44747, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/stendhal-the-red-and-the-black/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.