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LENGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 2

The Scarlet Pimpernel

Baroness Emmuska Orczy



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1.1 what's the book about?

- 1 Look at these pictures of people in the story. Which are the best words for each person? What do you think?

angry beautiful handsome happy sad thin



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.....

- 2 The French Revolution is important in this story. What do you know about it? Find answers to these questions in books or on the Internet. Then make notes in your notebook.

- a When did the French Revolution start?
- b What kind of people started the French Revolution? Why?
- c What kind of people left France at that time? Why?

1.2 What happens first?

Look at the picture on page 1. Discuss these questions and write possible answers.

- 1 Where are the people in the picture? Why are they there?

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- 2 A man is sitting on a box. What is his job?

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A Dangerous Time in France

'You're right, Mr Hempseed,' Jellyband answered. 'People in France are dying, and what does our government do? Nothing.'

It was September, 1792. Bibot, a **soldier**, sat on a box at one of the doors in the Paris city wall. He watched the door carefully – he enjoyed his job. From inside the wall, a large number of Parisians watched the door too. They were excited. These were France's new **revolutionaries** and they hated rich **aristocrats**. They wanted to kill them.

It was a very dangerous time for French aristocrats. Many of them tried to leave Paris, but the revolutionary soldiers stopped them here at the city walls. Bibot caught many of them. Sometimes the aristocrats wore **disguises**, but Bibot was a clever man. He knew an aristocrat when he saw one.



soldier /'səʊldʒə/ (n) A *soldier* carries a gun and fights for his or her country.

revolutionary /revə'lju:ʃənəri/ (n/adj) *Revolutionaries* want to change their country. This is the time of the French *Revolution*.

aristocrat /'æristəkræt/ (n) *Aristocrats* were at that time the most important class of people in a country. They were often very rich and had large houses.

disguise /dis'gɑ:z/ (n) You wear a *disguise* when you want to look like a different person. You are then *in disguise*.

But Bibot was more careful these days because the aristocrats had help – the help of an Englishman. This Englishman and his friends **rescued** French aristocrats and took them to England. Nobody knew the man's name, but people called him the Scarlet Pimpernel. After a rescue, he always sent the French soldiers a note with a picture of the little red flower – a scarlet pimpernel – on it. The revolutionary soldiers hated him.

Bibot talked to his men. Other people stood near him and listened. 'Did you hear about GrosPierre?' Bibot asked.

'No. What happened?'

'It was last week. GrosPierre was at the north door. An old man and a young boy drove a **cart** past him. GrosPierre looked inside the cart, but he saw nothing. So the cart left the city. Half an hour later, another soldier arrived with his men. "You stupid man, GrosPierre," he said. "The Comte* de Chalis and his family were in that cart. And the driver was the Englishman – the Scarlet Pimpernel!" Then that soldier and his men went out of the city after the aristocrats.'

Everybody laughed at the story. GrosPierre *was* very stupid! Why didn't he look in the cart carefully?

Bibot looked at his listeners. 'But the Comte de Chalis *wasn't* in the cart,' he said.

'What?'

'*Nobody* was in the cart. But that soldier was the Scarlet Pimpernel, in disguise – and his men were all aristocrats!'

This time, the listeners said nothing. The Scarlet Pimpernel really was very clever.

It was night now. Many cart-drivers wanted to leave the city before Bibot closed the door. Bibot looked in each of the carts carefully and talked to every driver.

*Comte, Comtesse, Vicomte, Marquis: French names for aristocrats

rescue /'reskju:/ (v/n) When you *rescue* somebody, you take them out of a dangerous place.

cart /ka:rt/ (n) Carts carry people or things from one place to another place. Horses or people pull carts.

‘I’m a better soldier than that stupid Gropierre,’ he thought.
One driver was an ugly old woman.
‘My son is behind me in the cart, but he’s very ill,’ she told Bibot. ‘Be careful when you go near him!’
Bibot was afraid and walked away from the cart.
‘Leave, old woman,’ he said, and the cart drove away.



Later, another soldier ran to the city wall. Bibot knew him.
‘A cart!’ the man shouted.
‘What cart?’ asked Bibot.
‘The driver was an old woman ...’
‘Was the son ill?’
‘Yes ... Did they leave the city?’ Bibot’s face turned white. ‘The Comtesse de Tournay and her two children were in the cart!’
‘And the driver?’ asked Bibot, but he knew the answer to his question.

The Scarlet Pimpernel

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British English

Classic

In Paris, in 1792, people are dying. Aristocrats are running from angry revolutionaries, and a brave Englishman is helping them. He and his friends are taking them to England. But who is this Englishman, this 'Scarlet Pimpernel'? The revolutionaries really want to know – and then they can kill him.

Number of words (excluding activities): 9,451

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