

Introduction

Father Claude named the poor child Quasimodo and gave him a home in the cathedral. The boy could not exist in the outside world, but with the priest's help he made a life inside the walls of Notre-Dame.

The idea for one of his greatest books, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, came to Victor Hugo when he was still in his twenties, on a visit to the Cathedral of Notre-Dame. This wonderful church excited the young writer and he placed it at the center of the action. It plays an important part in the lives of the three main people in the book: Quasimodo, the hunchback; Esmeralda, the beautiful gypsy girl; and Father Claude Frollo, the lost priest. It is a sanctuary and a prison for all of them.

As a young priest, Claude Frollo finds his life's work in the cathedral. It is a sanctuary where he can study and work. He becomes a proud, successful churchman. But suddenly, after many years, he feels a need to escape from his life as a priest. Notre-Dame has become a prison that stops him finding love.

The cathedral is a prison for Quasimodo, too, because he cannot live outside it. He is ugly and different, and people are afraid of him. He is safe and happy inside its walls with Father Claude and with the great bells of Notre-Dame. But he also wants more from life.

The hunchback and the priest exist together in the cathedral until Esmeralda arrives. Without knowing it, the gypsy girl brings pain and suffering into their quiet lives. Notre-Dame also plays a large part in her story. It offers her sanctuary, but is also a prison. Death waits for her outside.

In English, this book is known as *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*. For most modern readers, this is a good title. Quasimodo is the person in the story that we remember most clearly. He has