



PRESENTS:

THE WORKS OF LEO TOLSTOY

Of Leo Tolstoy, British critic Matthew Arnold stated that he did not so much make works of art but rather “pieces of life.” The praise captures an essential aspect of the **Russian** author’s prodigious talents. Tolstoy combined a piercing intellect with legendary powers of observation to write some of the greatest works of fiction ever made. In his later years Tolstoy wrote extensively on Christianity, and his theories of nonviolent resistance had a profound impact on the likes of **Mahatma Gandhi** and **Martin Luther King Jr.** Let’s learn some more about Tolstoy’s works, and maybe we’ll learn something more about the world writ large. Tolstoy would certainly hope so.

By analyzing questions, you can see patterns emerge, patterns that will help you answer questions. Qwiz5 is all about those patterns. In our (Qwiz5)² guides, we present you with the most important information from a group -- the most important German composers, the most important political treaties, etc. -- and break down the key facts to help you keep them straight.

War and Peace

The Happy and Unhappy Families: *War and Peace* is a monumental work set during the Napoleonic Wars, and to list every character would be impossible. However, five families do feature prominently. These five families are: the Bezukhovs (primarily the awkward **Pierre Bezukhov**), the Bolkonskys (specifically the world-weary **Prince Andrei Bolkonsky**), the Rostovs (with especial focus on **Nikolai**, **Natasha** and **Sonya**), the Kuragins (brother and sister **Hélène** and Anatole), and the Drubetskoys. Other notable characters include the military officer **Fyodor Dolokhov**, the peasant **Platon Karataev**, and even Napoleon.

War & Peace, and Everything Else: Each family in *War and Peace* has their own arc, often intersecting with the experiences of other families. Prince Andrei, disillusioned with St. Petersburg life and his wife **Lise**, joins the army to seek glory. He later dies at the **Battle of Borodino**. Pierre becomes obsessed with **freemasonry** and attempts to **assassinate Napoleon**, believing him to be the Antichrist. By the novel's end Pierre's first wife, the vapid socialite **Hélène Kuragin**, has died, and he kindles a new romance with Natasha. Nikolai ruins the Rostov family's fortunes after a disastrous gambling loss to Dolokhov but is redeemed through a happy marriage with **Maria Bolkonsky**.

What is Art?: Tolstoy intersperses frequent essays throughout *War and Peace*. These essays criticize existing theories of history, especially the **Great Man theory of history**. *War and Peace* depicts war as anything but glorious, instead emphasizing its chaotic nature. Napoleon himself is depicted as an inept, buffoonish character **when Prince Andrei meets him after the Battle of Austerlitz**.

The Kingdom of God is Within Your Book: Although *War and Peace* was written before Tolstoy's renewed interest in Christianity, religious themes do pervade the work. Pierre's goal of killing Napoleon is **driven by his misunderstanding of gematria, or numerology**. Hélène converts to Catholicism in hopes that the **Pope will personally annul her marriage to Pierre**. Ultimately, the happiest and most successful characters in the book are those who adopt a simple and humble faith.

Buzz On: **Overdose of abortion medicine** - although not explicitly stated by Tolstoy, it is heavily implied that Hélène dies late in the novel by overdosing on medicine intended to cause an abortion; **Bald Hills**, the location of the Bolkonsky family estate.

Anna Karenina

The Happy and Unhappy Families: Domesticity is a major theme of *Anna Karenina*, and there are certainly some unhappy families in this epic novel. Major characters include the titular Anna Karenina, her lover **Count Vronsky**, and her older husband **Alexei Karenin**. Anna's sister-in-law, Princess Ekaterina—nicknamed "**Kitty**"—and her suitor **Konstantin Levin** also play prominent roles in the novel.

War & Peace, and Everything Else: Like *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* is a sprawling novel touching on many subjects. In brief, the novel details the dissolution of Anna's marriage to Karenin over her affair with Vronsky, leading to her **eventual suicide**. Simultaneously, Levin courts Kitty, eventually marrying her and moving to his **country estate**.

What is Art?: Tolstoy juxtaposes numerous ideas in his novel. He contrasts the provincial lifestyle of Levin with the **modernization of Russia** exemplified by **the recurrent motif of trains**. *Anna Karenina* also explores the social costs of infidelity, exposing the ostracism Anna endures from former friends like **Princess Elizaveta ("Betsy")**.

The Kingdom of God Is Within Your Book: A major plot point of *Anna Karenina* is Levin's renewed belief in Christian principles, **dramatized by a lightning storm at his estate**. Other religious characters include **Madame Stahl**, a devout Lutheran Kitty meets while abroad in Germany and the **Countess Lidia Ivanovna**, a mystical enthusiast who advises Karenin during Anna's affair.

Buzz On: **Frou-Frou**, Count Vronsky's horse, who dies of a broken back after Vronsky over-exerts her during a race; **Landau**, a French clairvoyant who influences Karenin to deny Anna a divorce; **Stubby legs** - Kitty is disillusioned to find the seemingly devout Madame Stahl remains in a wheelchair due to vanity over her stubby legs.

The Death of Ivan Ilyich

The Happy and Unhappy Families: The central figure of this Tolstoy novella is Ivan Ilyich, an accomplished jurist. Other characters include his cold and selfish wife, ***Praskovya Feodorovna Golodin***, who is contrasted with his dutiful butler ***Gerasim***. Ivan has a son and daughter as well, named ***Vasya*** and ***Lisa*** respectively.

War & Peace and Everything Else: The novella begins with the pleasant, nondescript Ivan ***falling while hanging curtains***. The pain he feels from the fall increases, and a physician eventually diagnoses him with a terminal disease. The remainder of the novella focuses on Ilyich's gradual acceptance of his death, ***progressing from bitterness to peace***.

What is Art?: Shorter than the two previously-discussed works, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* nonetheless tackles weighty subjects. The comfort of Ivan's bourgeoisie lifestyle rapidly falls away after his diagnosis, ***exemplified by his friend Peter's abandonment of the Golodin household***. Before coming to a religious epiphany, Ivan turns to logic and philosophy to explain his suffering, recalling a ***sylogism about Caius***. These approaches are ultimately unsuccessful.

The Kingdom of God Is Within Your Book: The ***simple faith*** of Gerasim is ultimately what allows Ivan to accept his death. In his final moments, Ivan ***lays a hand on his son*** and feels release from his pain.

Buzz On: ***Whist***, the card game Ivan's shallow, materialistic friends engage in while he's dying; ***Vermiform appendix*** - A possible cause of Ivan Ilyich's ills that ultimately turns out to be a dead end.

The Kreutzer Sonata

The Happy and Unhappy Families: Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* focuses on a very unhappy family indeed. Narrated by **Pozdnyshev**, the *Kreutzer Sonata* concerns the sordid love triangle between him, his wife, and the violinist **Troukhatchevsky**.

War & Peace and Everything Else: Pozdnyshev narrates the events of *The Kreutzer Sonata* to a group of strangers on a train. He relates his tempestuous relationship with his wife and his fury when she began to **take contraceptives**. Pozdnyshev's wife becomes infatuated with the violinist Troukhatchevsky, and after the pair perform Beethoven's ***Kreutzer Sonata***, Pozdnyshev becomes insanely jealous. He finds the pair in flagrante delicto upon returning home early from a trip and **murders his wife**.

What is Art?: Despite its relative brevity, *The Kreutzer Sonata* asks a variety of pointed questions about the society of Tolstoy's day. Pozdnyshev begins his rambling monologue when a woman on the train questions **arranged marriages**. Pozdnyshev claims that men only **admire women's outer forms** and his other companions on the train opine about the rights of women.

The Kingdom of God Is Within Your Book: The frank sexual themes of *The Kreutzer Sonata* obviously caused a stir when it was published. However, in an **epilogue** published after the fact, Tolstoy argued that he wrote the story **to promote sexual abstinence** in keeping with his idiosyncratic Christianity.

Buzz On: **Socks** - Pozdnyshev allows Troukhatchevsky to escape him because he didn't want to chase him out of the house "wearing only his socks;" **Domostroy**, a derisive nickname applied to an old man on the train who espouses misogynistic views.

“How Much Land Does A Man Need”

The Happy and Unhappy Families: **Pahom** is the peasant protagonist of this Tolstoy short story. Other notables include a cameo by **Satan**, as well as a group of **Bashkirs** (a group of Turkic peoples native to Russia).

War & Peace and Everything Else: The plot of “How Much Land Does a Man Need” is straightforward. The peasant Pahom makes a bet with the Devil that if he had enough land, he “**wouldn’t fear the Devil himself!**” Eventually, however, Pahom bites off more than he can chew. While attempting to scam the Bashkirs out of their land by claiming as much land as he can walk across in one day, Pahom **drops dead from exhaustion**. It turns out that all the land one man needs is the space needed to **bury him**.

What is Art?: Tolstoy uses Pahom’s experiences to explore provincial life. The short story opens, in fact, with Pahom’s **wife and sister-in-law** arguing over the merits of **life in a town** vs. **life in the country**. Tolstoy also dramatizes how greed makes people cruel and paranoid, as Pahom grows to fear that his neighbors will **burn down his buildings**.

The Kingdom of God Is Within Your Book: The religious themes of the short story are fairly explicit thanks to the appearance of Satan. Pahom experiences a prophetic dream the day before his death, in which a **Bashkir chief turns into the Devil**.

Buzz On: **Simon**, one of Pahom’s neighbors, who Pahom attempts to take to court; **Simple people** - The Bashkir are described by Pahom’s business associates as simple-minded in the story, and Pahom is encouraged to take advantage of their lack of units of measurement to accrue as much land for himself as he can.

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