

# **The Brothers Karamazov Study Guide**

## **The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky**

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# Introduction

At the heart of *The Brothers Karamazov* is a murder mystery surrounding the homicide of a family patriarch, Fyodor Karamazov, and the role of his sons in the crime. The book is also a novel of ideas: Fedor Dostoevsky debates the existence of God, the role of religion in modern societies, and the consequences of class differences on the individual.

On its publication in 1881 readers were shocked by the controversial nature of the novel, in particular the frank discussions of religion and class division. Today, *The Brothers Karamazov* is considered one of the greatest novels in world literature; moreover, Dostoyevsky is renowned as one of the preeminent figures in Russian literature, along with such authors as Nikolai Gogol, Leo Tolstoy, and Alexander Pushkin. His work has influenced many important writers and thinkers of the twentieth century, such as Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, and Sigmund Freud.



## Author Biography

Born in Moscow on October 30, 1821, Dostoevsky grew up in a privileged family. His father, a doctor, was a tyrannical disciplinarian; his mother was a pious woman who died before Dostoevsky was sixteen. After her death the family moved to a spacious country estate. To escape the oppressive atmosphere at home, he developed a love for reading, in particular the works of Nikolai Gogol, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and Honore de Balzac.

While attending boarding school, Dostoevsky received word that his father had been murdered by his serfs. The family did not report the murder for fear of losing income; their serfs would undoubtedly have been sent to Siberia for the crime.

According to his father's wishes, Dostoevsky trained as an engineer at the School of Military Engineers in St. Petersburg. With this training, he accepted a commission in the Czar's army in 1843. After a year he resigned and began his career as an author, depending on income from the family estate. His first novel, *Poor Folk* (1846), was published to great critical acclaim but little commercial success.

Dostoevsky's participation in the subversive and socialist Petrashevsky Circle led to his imprisonment. In 1849 he was ordered to die by firing squad. Fortunately, an imperial rider appeared in the nick of time with the message that his sentence had been commuted to ten years of hard labor in Omsk, Siberia.

This traumatic experience prompted Dostoevsky to abandon his interest in humanism, atheism, Western ideas, and liberal thought; instead, he focused his attention on Russian Orthodox dogma and conservative politics. These new interests were fueled by studying the only book allowed prisoners in Siberia—the New Testament. Consequently, Dostoevsky's works after 1849 are wrought with Gospel images of suffering and redemption.

After four years in the penal colony at Omsk, he was released on the condition that he serve in the army at Semipalatinsk. While in the service, he met and married a widow. In 1859, with a grant of full amnesty, Dostoevsky returned with his wife to St. Petersburg. He set to work immediately and started two political journals. He wrote articles on his belief that Russia should take a religious and conservative course in its development and published them in his magazines. Tragically, he suffered several personal and professional setbacks in the next few years: his wife died in 1864; he became a gambling addict; his brother died; and the authorities shut down his political journals.

In 1867 Dostoevsky married Anna Snitkina, a young woman who had been employed as his stenographer. Soon after they married, they traveled to Europe to escape creditors. Together they raised four children: Sofia, Lyubov, Fyodor, and Aleksei. These years abroad proved very fruitful for Dostoevsky, as he completed several works before his return to Russia in 1871.

In the 1870s he reconciled himself to the liberal elements of Russian politics. He finished *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1880. Within a year of the book's publication, Dostoevsky suffered a hemorrhage in his throat and died on January 28, 1881.



# Plot Summary

The Brothers Karamazov is a novel based in Russia in the mid-1800's, about four brothers and their wild father. The consequences of the father's actions reverberate throughout the sons' lives. The sons are Mitya, Ivan, Alyosha, and the bastard son Smerdyakov.

The brothers converge on the family home, each with a different agenda. The father, Fyodor, is a devious buffoon who loves to manipulate his sons and cause friction in the town. There are several incidents where Fyodor enrages Mitya, treats the other sons badly, and then, Fyodor is found dead. The town suspects Mitya, but the brothers suspect the bastard son, Smerdyakov, of killing Fyodor. Mitya has rushed to a nearby town to seduce Grushenka, but is quickly arrested and imprisoned. Ivan spends his time pursuing Mitya's previous fiancé, Katarina, and Alyosha is mourning the death of his mentor. Alyosha leaves the monastery to enter into the world of his passionate and hedonistic family, but is strong enough to resist the family character traits and actually do well in the community. Ivan starts out his adult life a calm and reasonable man, but slowly goes mad with the desires fighting within him. Just before Mitya's trial, Smerdyakov commits suicide and all hope of freeing Mitya legally is gone. The jury finds Mitya guilty on all counts and he is given life in prison. Grushenka has committed her love to Mitya and pledges to follow him to prison, but Alyosha and Katarina are constructing a scheme to allow Mitya to escape. The story ends here, with Katarina making advances towards Mitya once again, and Alyosha mourning the death of a young man who has come to mean something to him. Alyosha reflects that friendships and brotherly love are where a man can draw strength and pride.

Mitya is engaged to Katarina, but has fallen in love with another woman Grushenka. His father is also in love with Grushenka. Grushenka is playing them against each other, and is actually awaiting word from an old lover, a Polish Officer.

Mitya enters into a fierce negotiation with his father Fyodor to secure his inheritance. Mitya brings his younger brother Ivan into the mediation, and the entire family with the exception of Smerdyakov goes to the Elder Zosima to seek assistance in sorting it out. This situation never gets sorted out, due to Mitya's impassioned pleas, his competition with his Father for Grushenka's favors, and Mitya's constant planning for revenge and money.

Mitya tells everyone he is going to kill his father. In the meantime, Grushenka plays the two men against each other, and then leaves to meet another man, one from her past. Mitya roars after her in a carriage laden with food and wine, and manages to run off the Polish officer and win Grushenka's heart back.

Just before boards the carriage, though, Mitya has been to his father's with every intention of killing him if Grushenka had been there. But she was not, so Mitya runs off to find her, and hits Grigory in the head on the way. After a drunken evening with Grushenka, Mitya is arrested, then brought to trial and found guilty.



During this time, Mitya has also become engaged to Katarina, but decides he will give her to his brother Ivan, who is only too happy to oblige. Katarina becomes interested in Ivan, but in the end, it is Mitya she still loves.

Alyosha is intertwined in this drama of Mitya, running messages between Katarina and Ivan and Mitya. Also, Alyosha's mentor is dying, and telling him to go out into the real world. Alyosha befriends a small boy and enters into the life of the boy's family and friends.

Ivan and Smerdyakov both detest Fyodor, but Smerdyakov misunderstands his admired older brother's feelings and decides to kill Fyodor in order to put Ivan in a better position for inheritance. Ivan is besieged by guilt and slides into insanity. Grushenka clings to her Mitya throughout the trial and afterwards they are planning to escape to America.

As the novel ends, Alyosha is telling his band of young men to remember these times when they were friends, when they did something good in their lives, and that memory will carry them through their difficult times in adulthood.





# Part I, Book One, Chapter 1 -5, Book Two, Chapter 1-8

## Part I, Book One, Chapter 1 -5, Book Two, Chapter 1-8 Summary

Alexie Fyodorovich Karamazov is a wealthy landowner who was married twice and had three sons. Dmitiri Fyodorovich is from the first wife, and Ivan and Alexei are by the second wife. After the death of his second wife, Fyodor continues his reputation as a womanizer and although his sons end up living with him, he ignores them. In Chapter 2 of Book One, the narrator speaks of the son Mitya, who Fyodor neglected shamefully. As a child, Mitya continues to be passed along from family to family until he ends up in the military, and begins a life of drinking and womanizing before even coming of age. In the story, Mitya confronts Fyodor for payments and his part of the estate. Mitya departs thinking the estate is worth far more than it is, and this becomes an elaborate plan of his father to be rid of him by giving him his entire inheritance while Mitya was thinking there was more to come.

When the ruse is discovered, Mitya loses all reason. In Chapter 3 of Book One, he tells of Ivan, the older of Sofia's children. He was always reserved and gloomy, yet very intelligent. Ivan wrote an article about ecclesiastical courts that gains wide acceptance and he becomes somewhat famous, and it is at this time that he comes home to confront his father. To the surprise of the entire town, Ivan and his father become great friends and companions. Later, it is revealed that Ivan had come at Mitya's request to serve as a mediator between the eldest son and the father.

In Chapter 4 of Book One, Alyosha, the youngest son, is described. This son is deeply introspective, and capable of great love for mankind. Alyosha chooses to become a monk, after becoming especially enamored of the respected monk Zosima. Fyodor loves Alyosha, and when the boy asks permission to enter the monastery, the father agrees he should go, and thanks him for being the only one who has not condemned him. The narrator continues in Chapter 5 of Book One with the description of the monk Zosima. Zosima is an elder, and at the time of this story is 65, and dying. The brothers and their father agree to meet in Zosima's cell, or his private room at the monastery, to come to an agreement regarding Mitya's claim of inheritance. Alyosha's guardian, Miusov, also comes to this meeting out of boredom.

The date is set, and Alyosha is deeply disturbed by the possibility that the elder Zosima will be somehow hurt during this meeting. Book Two, Chapter 1 begins with the arrival of the men at the monastery. They are invited by the Father Superior to dine with him at lunch. Mitya has not yet arrived for the meeting. Alyosha feels his foreboding for this meeting was well merited. Fyodor blurts out that he is a buffoon and gives several examples of his self-damaging behavior. Fyodor continues babbling, and tells the elder he is doing this in order to make himself endearing. In Chapter 2, Fyodor's babblings



and acting takes over the meeting. Zosima is wise and analyzes Fyodor's behavior correctly to the audience, but it does not stop Fyodor. Zosima rises to leave, and Alyosha assists him. At the door, Fyodor promises to be quiet.

In Chapter 3, Madame Khokhlakov waits to have an audience with Zosima, along with twenty other women. The elder works his way through the group, with words of wisdom, smiles, and encouragement, clearly making a difference in the lives of all who have come to see him. In Chapter 4, The Elder finally comes to Madame Khokhlakov and her daughter, and realizes the mother and daughter have actually come to visit Alyosha. In Chapter 5, The Elder returns to the meeting of Fyodor and his sons, and Mitya still has not arrived. Ivan and the two monks were in a lively discussion concerning Ivan's famous article. There is a long discussion concerning the separation of church and state. Zosima says the only thing that prevents someone from committing a crime is Christ's law. Suddenly, Mitya arrives. In Chapter 6, Mitya honors the Elder, bows to his father, then takes his seat. Suddenly Ivan rises from his chair and kisses the Elder's hand. Fyodor chooses this moment to present his case to the Elder, jumping up and pointing out his two sons Mitya and Ivan, and asking for the Elder's prophecies. Fyodor once again plays the buffoon and actor, stirring up emotions, telling stories, and making accusations. As all the men are arguing and exclaiming over his words, Zosima gets up, exhausted, and gets on his knees in front of Mitya, bowing until his head touches the ground. Mitya is mortified and leaves, and suddenly all the men are leaving the cell.

The monk who asked them to join the Father Superior is waiting, but Fyodor decides not to go to lunch, but to go home instead to dine. In Chapter 7, Alyosha accompanies the tired Elder to his bedroom, and Zosima tells Alyosha it is time for him to leave the monastery. Alyosha is confused, but promises to obey, and when he heads over to the monastery to assist in serving the Father Superior's lunch, he runs into Rakitin, a friend who was also in the Elder's cell during the meeting.

Rakitin has much to say, and tells Alyosha that Mitya is abandoning his fiancée Katarina for a seductress, Grushenka, that Ivan is now pursuing Katarina, and Fyodor is also in love with Grushenka. Rakitin believes that the Elder's bow before Mitya was identifying Mitya as a criminal for a crime that has not yet been committed. As the two men talk, everyone who was supposed to be eating lunch with Father Superior burst from the monastery and take their leave. In Chapter 8, Miusov and Ivan and the monks go into meet the Father Superior and Miusov apologizes on behalf of the absent Fyodor. Miusov is feeling benevolent and has decided he will cancel the lawsuits he currently is pursuing against the monastery. Just as the men sit down to eat, Fyodor bursts into the room and causes another ruckus. Everyone leaves after Fyodor makes wild accusations against the church and threatens to remove Alyosha from it.

## **Part I, Book One, Chapter 1 -5, Book Two, Chapter 1-8 Analysis**

Part I is where the author introduces the narrator and most of the major players in the novel. Fyodor's character as a horrible father, a self-important landowner and avowed



buffoon is clearly portrayed by the short biography of the man, and his actions at the meeting with Zosima. The author entitles the first book "a nice little family", which is sarcastic and biting, because there is no family other than blood ties, and there is nothing nice about Fyodor at all. The Inappropriate Gathering title describes a meeting of adult men who were supposed to be seeking counsel from a wise man to handle their contentious affairs, but nothing is accomplished because Mitya and Fyodor are not buying into any kind of compromise. These two characters are shown to the readers as men who follow their own desires and needs above the considerations of all others. The author uses foreshadowing as Zosima bows deeply before Mitya without explaining his action. The theme of sensualism and hedonism are dominant in these chapters through the thoughts and actions of Mitya and Fyodor.



# Part I, Book Three, Chapter 1-10

## Part I, Book Three, Chapter 1-10 Summary

Chapter 1 tells the story of Grigory the servant. Chapter 2 tells the story of Stinking Lizaveta, who was an insane woman who roamed about the town. One night a group of drunken men, including Fyodor, found her asleep along the stream bank and questioned whether she was a woman or an animal. Fyodor exclaimed she was a woman, and hung back after all the other men left. Several months later it was obvious Lizaveta was pregnant, and rumors began that it was the child of Fyodor. The night the baby was born, Lizaveta climbed over a fence and damaged herself; the child lived, but she died. The child was named Smerdyakov, and Fyodor brought the boy in to become one of his servants.

In Chapter 3, Alyosha leaves the monastery and decides to respond to Katarina's note. He finds Mitya waiting for him. Mitya is joyous, spouting poetry, and telling Alyosha the Karamazov brothers share a sensual insect that creates storms within their souls. In Chapter 4, Mitya tells his brother Alyosha the story of how he met and became enamored of Katarina, and how he tricked her family into giving him her in order to save her father's reputation. In Chapter 5, Mitya continues the story. Katarina wrote to Mitya and offered to be his wife. Mitya could not rush to her side, but sent Ivan instead, who instantly fell in love with Katarina. Now Mitya wants to send Alyosha to Katarina to tell her he does not want to marry her, and she should marry Ivan. Mitya confesses he has spent the money Katarina gave him to send to someone else on a wild drunken spree with Grushenka. Now Mitya desperately wants to acquire three thousand rubles, pay Katarina back, and go be whatever Grushenka will allow him to be in her life. Mitya knows that Fyodor, who loves Grushenka as well, has withdrawn three thousand from the bank and plans to give it to Grushenka if she will come be with him. Alyosha goes to see his father, and do as Mitya asks.

In Chapter 6, the story of Smerdyakov, Fyodor's bastard son, is told. He is somewhat feared by the neighborhood, as they cannot tell from his demeanor or appearance what he is thinking. In Chapter 7, Smerdyakov, who never speaks much, suddenly expresses opinions about religion and renouncing faith. In Chapter 8, Fyodor is very drunk, and he begins talking to his sons about their mother, seeming to forget it is their mother, and Alyosha is taken with a fit, just like his mother had been. Suddenly Mitya bursts into the room. In Chapter 9, Mitya believes Grushenka has come to Fyodor and is hidden in the house. He smashes through the house, hitting Grigory and then his father. Fyodor is hurt, but excited that Grushenka might have responded to his entreaties. Mitya leaves, in search of Grushenka. Fyodor is put to bed, and Alyosha stays with him. When Fyodor awakens he asks about Grushenka, then tells Alyosha he can return to the monastery. Alyosha departs to go see Katarina, then spend the night at the monastery.

In Chapter 10, Alyosha hurries to see Katarina, and finds Grushenka is there with Katarina. The two women are behaving almost like lovers, as Katarina gushes that



Grushenka is going to sort everything out so Mitya will come back to Katarina. In front of Alyosha, Grushenka denies everything and taunts Katarina. Katarina sends Grushenka from the house and is hysterical. As Alyosha departs, one of the maids gives him a sealed letter. In Chapter 11, Alyosha rushes to the monastery and meets his brother Mitya along the way. Mitya asks what happened at Katarina's house. Alyosha tells him, and to his surprise, Mitya strides off for Grushenka's house. Mitya says he will not see his brother for some time. Alyosha proceeds to the Elder's house and finds him gravely ill. Alyosha goes into the outer room to sleep and reads the letter, which turns out to be from Lise, professing her love for him.

## **Part I, Book Three, Chapter 1-10 Analysis**

The love triangle of Mitya, Grushenka and Katarina becomes even more confusing as Grushenka plays a mean trick on Katarina, and Katarina is completely taken by it. Mitya's true feelings, his love for Grushenka is shown when, after being told about the incident, Mitya goes to Grushenka the manipulator rather than Katarina the innocent victim. The competition between Mitya and Fyodor for Grushenka's attention is heightened when Mitya creates a scene at the Karamazov family home and beats his father. Smerdyakov's lowly origins are exposed to the reader, and the dark side of his character is explored. Now all of Fyodor's four sons are in the same town at the same time, all reaching a point in their lives where decisions are being made, their inheritance in question, and their futures being decided. Every relationship is experiencing huge conflict and upheaval.



## **Part II, Book Four, Chapter 1-7 Book Five, Chapter 1-7 Part II, Book Six, Chapter 1-3 ,**

### **Part II, Book Four, Chapter 1-7 Book Five, Chapter 1-7 Part II, Book Six, Chapter 1-3 , Summary**

Zosima is still weak, but rouses himself enough to speak to Alyosha. The monks surrounding the Elder speak of a miracle involving Madame Khokhlakov's daughter and children, and a visiting monk asks other monks their opinion. Father Ferapont is an opponent of Zosima, and speaks of devils and iniquity and is quite mad. But because Father Ferapont is a faster, the visiting monk tends to believe him more. Alyosha is still at the side of the Elder, but Zosima sends him home to be with his family, promising that his last words will be to Alyosha. In Chapter 2, Alyosha goes to see his father, who is in a foul mood. Fyodor 's only concern is that Grushenka might feel sorry for Mitya and choose him over Fyodor that keeps him from calling the authorities about his eldest son. For a moment it seems Fyodor will give Mitya money to go away, without Grushenka, and Alyosha suggests the magic sum of three thousand, the amount Mitya needs to repay Katarina. Fyodor is also questioning Ivan's motives, and tells Alyosha that he is not giving any of his sons any money or anything that they want, he is keeping everything, even his soul, for himself. As Alyosha rises to leave, Fyodor tells him he is the only son he loves, and asks him to come back tomorrow.

In Chapter 3, Alyosha leaves his father's house, looking for Mitya. Alyosha encounters a group of schoolboys, and approaches them to speak, because he has always liked children. He sees that six boys and exchanging rock throwing with a lone boy. Alyosha tries to stop the fight, but the lone boy throws rocks at him as well, hitting him. Alyosha goes after the boy, and tries to speak reasonably with him, but the boy throws more rocks and finally bites Alyosha deeply on the finger. Alyosha asks him why he is attacking him, but the boy runs off. In Chapter 4, Alyosha goes to the house of Madame Khokhlakov, and the Madame is overly glad to see him. Lise peeks through a door and arranges to see him privately. A huge fuss is made over his bite wound, and Alyosha's finger is treated by Lise, who asks for her letter back. Alyosha says he will be leaving the monastery after the Elder dies, and wants to marry Lise. Lise is hysterical by this time, and demands that he leave, but her mother insists he stay and talk to Ivan and Katarina, who are telling each other they are in love, but Katarina is bent on marrying Mitya.

In Chapter 5, Alyosha meets with Katarina and Ivan, and Katarina announces that she is going to devote her life to making Mitya a better man. Ivan sarcastically agrees it is the right decision. Ivan says he is leaving the next day for Moscow, and Katarina asks him to tell her sister of Katarina's decision. Alyosha stands up, saying the truth I that



Katarina is only staying with Mitya because she feels beholden to him, that she really loves Ivan, and he expresses the thought she is behaving as an actress. Ivan leaves, and Katarina leaves the room, coming back with 200 roubles and asking Alyosha to find some man who Mitya hurt and give him the money. Madame Khokhlakov encourages him to do so right away and then come back.

Lise is waiting for Alyosha to come speak to her, but he rushes off to do this errand, hoping that it will give him a chance to figure out what is going on. Katarina and Lise are both in hysterics, and Alyosha is not eager to stay at the house. In Chapter 6, Alyosha has an idea that the child who bit him that morning is the son of the man who Mitya shamed at the bar, and when he arrives at the cottage, he sees that his idea was correct. The man, Captain Snegiryov, is surrounded by his unusual family, women who are crippled and insane, introduces everyone, and then takes Alyosha outside. In Chapter 7, Alyosha and the Captain walk, and talk, and the Captain tells of the anguish his son has experienced since seeing Mitya humiliate his father in front of the entire town. The boy is ridiculed at school, and the Captain and the boy distract themselves from the misery of their lives by dreaming of moving to another town and starting out new. Alyosha listens carefully, and then gives the man the two hundred roubles from Katarina. At first, the Captain is very excited and full of plans, but after a series of exclamations of how the money could be used to make the lives of his family better, the Captain is overcome with pride. The Captain throws the money on the ground and steps on it, and then runs back home. Alyosha picks up the money and walks back to Katarina's house.

In Part II, Book Five, Chapter 1, Alyosha goes to Lise, and the two plan out their lives. Lise's mother says Katarina has fainted, is now running a fever, and the doctor does not know what is wrong. In Chapter 2, Alyosha goes to the garden where Mitya has been waiting, but Mitya is not there. As Alyosha waits, he hears Smerdyakov playing the guitar for a young lady named Maria, and discussing Smerdyakov's life and family. Alyosha interrupts them, asking where Mitya is, and is surprised and dismayed to learn that Mitya and Ivan are together at the Metropolis bar. Alyosha rushes to the tavern, and as he approaches, Ivan opens a window and calls out to him to join him.

In Chapter 3, Alyosha joins Ivan, but Mitya is not there. Ivan explains his philosophy of God and religion to Alyosha, and tells Alyosha he wants to be healed by him. In Chapter 4, Ivan teases his brother, saying he has written a grand poem that Alyosha will enjoy. In Chapter 5, Ivan's poem is not a poem but a story, and the way Ivan twists the story of Jesus upsets Alyosha. The two brothers part, and Alyosha realizes how late it is, and how sick his Elder is, and rushes to the monastery, forgetting that he needed to find Mitya in Chapter 6, Ivan goes to his father's house and encounters Smerdyakov, who recently has been upsetting Ivan for a reason he cannot understand. The two men talk, and Smerdyakov tells Ivan he has been in fear of his life because both Mitya and Fyodor have arranged with him to watch for Grushenka, and both have threatened to kill him if something happens.

In Chapter 7, Ivan departs for Moscow. His father has asked him to close out a deal for him in Chermashnya, and at first Ivan agrees to do it, then changes his mind and goes





to Moscow. Not knowing of Ivan's change of plans, Smerdyakov has a terrible epileptic fit, probably falsified, and Grigory is still ill, so Fyodor is left to lock his house up and await Grushenka's knock.

Alyosha rushes to the home of Zosima and is surprised to see him sitting up, cheerful, and receiving visitors. Zosima encourages Alyosha to go as soon as possible to find Mitya, because Zosima is afraid something terrible is going to happen with Mitya. In Chapter 2, Alyosha has recorded many of the stories that Zosima told about the life he led before becoming a monk, and the people who had made a profound effect on his life. In Chapter 3, there are many passages from the book written by Alyosha, which is extended to include speeches and stories of life shared with the monks by Zosima. The goodness and love in the elder's heart has clearly affected Alyosha. The day that Zosima encouraged Alyosha to go and find his brother Mitya was the day that the Elder passed away.

## **Part II, Book Four, Chapter 1-7 Book Five, Chapter 1-7 Part II, Book Six, Chapter 1-3 , Analysis**

In these sections, the subplot concerning Ilyusha begins, a story that concerns the goodness of Alyosha's heart. Alyosha appears to be the only Karamazov son who is decent and without evil purpose. Alyosha's role becomes one of messenger, mediator and a catalyst of calm and peace for the village and the family. He extends his calm demeanor and tries to fulfill some of the wishes of the Elder by proposing to Lise, but she will turn out to be an inappropriate choice for him. There is much talk in these chapters regarding Ivan and Alyosha's different views on religion, and the role religion plays in the lives of Russians. Ivan says he is an atheist, but his thoughts dwell constantly on the church, its law, and the meaning of life. There is great change in the air as Zosima, Alyosha's dear mentor, passes away. There are two chapters devoted to the life and times of Zosima, and although these chapters give the author voice for his ideas about spirituality and religion, they don't move the story forward in any way. Alyosha's recordings of these stories, homilies and memories of Zosima made a profound effect on his life.





## Part III, Book Seven, Chapter 1-3, Part III, Book Eight, Chapter 1-8

### Part III, Book Seven, Chapter 1-3, Part III, Book Eight, Chapter 1-8 Summary

When the Elder dies, his body is placed in an open coffin in his cell, and unfortunately, the odor of the deceased body begins much earlier than is normal. In Chapter 2, Alyosha leaves the monastery, not because he is ashamed of the smell from the coffin of his hero, but because his hero's day was ruined by the disgrace mentioned by other monks. Alyosha does not go far, and Rakitin finds him face down in the pine grove. Rakitin persists in asking questions, offering food and vodka at his house, and Alyosha gets up to go with him. At the last moment, Rakitin suggests they go to see Grushenka first. In Chapter 3, Alyosha and Rakitin arrive at Grushenka's house, where she is dressed as if for a trip. Grushenka sits on Alyosha's lap.

Alyosha is not seduced by her, and even refers to her as a sister. Grushenka is verging on hysterics, and reveals to the men that she is waiting for a message from the man who abandoned her five years before, and as she is talking to Alyosha and Rakitin she changes her mind repeatedly about going. The carriage arrives to take Grushenka to her old lover, and she departs. In Chapter 4, Alyosha returns to the monastery and prays before the coffin of Zosima, and has a vision of the Biblical story of Jesus' first miracle, turning water to wine, and Zosima is at the wedding. Alyosha is filled with religious joy and three days later he leaves the monastery as Zosima instructed.

Mitya is in a terrible state, and has no idea Grushenka has left town to be with the other man. Mitya can't seem to get around the fact that he owes Katarina three thousand roubles, and he has no income to take Grushenka away. He decides to go see Kuzma Samsonov and convince him somehow that he should give Mitya the money. He makes an awful garbled presentation, and Kuzma directs him to go see the man who is trying to buy Fyodor's land in another town, and Kuzma sets up Mitya to be a fool. In Chapter 2, Mitya goes directly to Lyagavy, and finds the man he needs to talk to but the man is hopelessly drunk.

Mitya spends all night trying to make the man sober and finally he is able to speak to the man, and it turns out Samsonov has tricked Mitya. Mitya leaves, despondent, but somehow comes up with another plan and heads back to see Grushenka. In Chapter 3, Mitya's new plan is to ask Madame Khokhlakov for the money. When he arrives she behaves as if she knew what he was coming for, and he believes she is going to give him the three thousand. But Madame Khokhlakov has merely come up with an idea for him to go find gold mines, come back to the town and be a great man. When Mitya realizes she is just babbling some wild scheme, he leaves angrily and heads to the home of Grushenka, where he is told she is not there. Not waiting for an explanation, Mitya runs off to his father's house, thinking that he has lost her to him.



In Chapter 4, Mitya sells his fine dueling pistols to Pyotr Illyich, and then goes into the garden of his father's home and spies on him through a window. He sees Fyodor dressed up, and thinks maybe Grushenka is there, but soon realizes the man is alone. He taps on the window, and Fyodor sticks his head out the window, calling for Grushenka. Even though Mitya knows now that Fyodor is alone, he is overcome by a desire to kill him and take the three thousand that Fyodor is holding to tempt Grushenka to marry him. Just then Grigory stirs from his bed, realizing he has left the garden gate open. As he crosses the garden he comes upon Mitya running through the garden, and tries to stop him. Suddenly Grigory collapses and his head is bleeding. Mitya leans over him, tries to bring him around, and then realizes the man is probably dead. Mitya flees from the house. In Chapter 5, Mitya runs back to Grushenka's house and demands the servants tell him where Grushenka is. Fenya tells him the truth that Grushenka has left to reunite with her old lover. Mitya leaves her and goes to the man who purchased his dueling pistols. Mitya waves money about, claiming he wants his pistols back, then sends a boy to the local grocers, telling them to prepare a huge order of food and champagne and wine to load into a carriage he is taking to follow Grushenka. He takes Pyotr with him to the grocers, and then takes off with all the food and wine, and Pyotr goes home muttering to himself. After a few games of billiards, Pyotr starts wondering why Mitya was covered with blood and where the money really came from, and he goes to speak with Grushenka's maid, Fenya.

In Chapter 6, Mitya arrives at the tavern in Mokroye. On the way he has promised himself he just wants to see her, and if she is happy, he will leave her life forever. He talks to the coachman about his soul, asks if the coachman will forgive him for all his sins. When they arrive, Mitya talks to the innkeeper, who remembers how Mitya spent so much money the month before. He allows Mitya to sit in a room near the party of people Grushenka is with, and he watches for a few moments before rising and entering the room, surprising Grushenka.

In Chapter 7, Mitya breaks in on the group. There is Grushenka, Kalganov, Moxima, another man, and the Polish officer who used to be Grushenka's lover. Mitya insists on being able to join them, bring food and wine and bring back memories of the last time he was there, with Grushenka, and he even pulls out the wad of money he has been carrying about. Grushenka asks if Mitya is going to frighten her, and he sits down and starts crying. The men all begin to talk, to decide about playing cards, and Kalganov laughs about things Moxima is saying.

When the men begin to play cards, Kalganov wants them to stop. Mitya takes the two Polish men into another room and offers to pay them to go away and leave Grushenka with him. The men laugh, and go back to tell Grushenka. Her Polish officer says he sees she has had many lovers and he no longer wants her. Grushenka says he is not the man he was. The Polish officer yells at her, and Mitya attacks him, shoving both of the men out of the room. In Chapter 8, the party begins with more drinking, candies, dancing and women singing. Grushenka tells Mitya she loves him, then that she had been in love with the Polish Officers, and they all drink too much. Grushenka faints and when she awakens, there are more people at the inn, but these are policemen, and they place Mitya under arrest for the murder of his father, Fyodor.



## Part III, Book Seven, Chapter 1-3, Part III, Book Eight, Chapter 1-8 Analysis

Grushenka is known around the town as the "seductress", and it is apparent in this section that she has earned that title. She is embroiled in the mortal combat between Fyodor and his son Mitya, and has let both men think she will choose one of them, yet she is currently awaiting a carriage from an older lover to take her away from the town forever. The controversy surrounding Zosima's cadaver smelling bad is indicative of the period, when superstition, religion and myth were not clearly separated in the minds of men. This incident allows the author to take even more liberties with the mixing of superstition and religion later in the book when Ivan begins to have doubts about his own beliefs. Alyosha is devastated when his Elder dies, and Zosima's last words to him show just how sensitive the monk was when dealing with his beloved student.

Mitya truly lives in a fantasy world, as he contemplates life with Grushenka and sees the seductress and the sensualist living a quiet, contemplative and faithful life if only they could remove everyone else from their lives. What Mitya fails to see, or does not want to see, is that Grushenka herself has pulled all these others into their affairs through her constant need for attention and love. Instead of trying to determine the true cause of the dissention in their relationship, Mitya rushes about the countryside trying to find someone to loan him three thousand roubles, which will free him from Katarina and allow him to take Grushenka away. Yet Katarina cannot be sent away merely by the repayment of a loan, Grushenka has actually already left him for another man, and no one is going to loan Mitya money because his reputation as a wild and careless man is known even in Moscow.

This section also shows how Mitya consistently resorts to violence when frustrated or angered, leaving the reader to believe Mitya could easily carry out his threat to kill his father. In the scene at his father's house, with Fyodor hanging his head out the window in the night, the author skillfully leaves the question unanswered, and all the reader knows is that someone murdered Fyodor. Grushenka is once again in love with Mitya as he gallantly and recklessly rushes to win her away from her somewhat boring Polish officer, and throughout the remainder of the novel, she continues to be at Mitya's side.



## **Part III, Book Nine, Chapter 1-9 , Part IV, Book Ten, Chapter 1-7**

### **Part III, Book Nine, Chapter 1-9 , Part IV, Book Ten, Chapter 1-7 Summary**

Pyotr Ilyich searches for Mitya, remembers Mitya said he got the three thousand from Madame Khokhlakov. Pyotr goes to ask that woman if it is true. Madame says she did not loan him the money, and Pyotr leaves, but not before the two of them make quite an impression upon each other. In Chapter 2, Pyotr heads to the house of the local district commissioner of Police, Mikhail Makarovich Kakarov and it is obvious everyone at the commissioner's dinner party has already known of Fyodor's death. Grigory has survived, but is terribly injured, and Fyodor is dead, and the money he had waiting for Grushenka is gone. The officials go out to find Mitya. In Chapter 3, Mitya is questioned by the police. He thinks they are arresting him for the murder of Grigory, and is shocked to hear his father is dead. In Chapter 4, Mitya begins telling his story, thinking how entertaining it all is, telling every thought, being generous with details, and the police are writing everything down. He becomes haughty, deciding he does not have to tell them some details because they are private. In Chapter 5, Mitya tells his story of seeing his father, and knocking on the window, and his father coming out, yet he claims he did not hit his father with the pestle. The police and prosecutors try to get him to implicate Smerdyakov but Mitya says that is impossible. When they ask him to produce his money, and then they begin the accounting of how much he has spent, it is not three thousand, but more like fifteen hundred.

In Chapter 6, Mitya is told to take off most of his clothes for examination. Mitya is now growing angrier, and refuses to answer some of the questions, thinking he is above their station. The police tell him that Grigory remembers the door being open when he saw Mitya, which Mitya says was closed. As the police begin to explain their evidence pointing to him, Mitya exclaims that it had to be Smerdyakov that killed his father. In Chapter 7, Mitya tells the officers and prosecutor the money he had, the fifteen hundred he came to Mokroye last night with, was his money left over from the three thousand Katarina had given him to send to her family. He claims he has been carrying the money in an amulet around his neck for a month and has told no one. The officers do not believe him. In Chapter 8, as the witnesses come in and go out, the police and the prosecutors concentrate on determining how much money Mitya has spent in Mokroye during the two trips. The general consensus continues to be three thousand on the first trip, and bringing three thousand on this one. Even Grushenka's testimony reveals this. Afterwards, Mitya falls asleep and dreams of a child crying. In Chapter 9, the police and prosecutors read Mitya's statement and he must be taken back to the village and the investigation continued. Mitya says goodbye to Grushenka, who pledges to be with him forever. The carts with the officers and Mitya leave.



In Book Ten, Chapter 1, the story of Kolya Krasotkin is told. Kolya is the one who was stabbed by Ilyusha, the boy who bit Alyosha. Kolya is described as a prankster who is reserved with his feelings and manipulates his mother, who adores him. In Chapter 2, Kolya has been charged with watching the neighbor children, a girl 8, and a boy 7, who adore him. He needs to leave the house, though and does as soon as the maid returns from grocery shopping. It is obvious everyone likes Kolya, especially his mongrel dog. In Chapter 3, Kolya and his dog go to meet Smurov, another of the boys who were throwing rocks at Ilyusha, and they are headed to Ilyusha's house to make peace with him, as he is dying of consumption. They talk about how Ilyusha's family is rich now, and that Alyosha is always there. Just as they arrive at the house, Kolya sends Smurov ahead to get Alyosha to come outside and speak to him first.

In Chapter 4, Alyosha comes out to meet Kolya and they strike up a good friendship. Kolya tells Alyosha he wants to learn from him. In Chapter 5, Kolya comes in and is the life of the party as he presents the dog, who actually is Zhuchka, and gives Ilyusha a small toy canon as well. Kolya presides over the conversation, all the while looking to see if Alyosha is approving or disapproving of his comments, and cannot tell from his demeanor which it is. The doctor from Moscow arrives. In Chapter 6, Kolya and Alyosha await outside while the doctor examines Ilyusha. They speak of many things, of education, of friends, and of their new friendship. In Chapter 7, the doctor comes out, and the news is grave. Ilyusha is indeed dying. The Captain comes out and pleads with the doctor for information, how he can save Ilyusha, but there is no hope, the doctor says only taking the boy to Sicily will help. The doctor leaves and everyone goes back in to see Ilyusha and the Captain is crying. Alyosha and Kolya leave, promising Ilyusha they will be back later.

## **Part III, Book Nine, Chapter 1-9 , Part IV, Book Ten, Chapter 1-7 Analysis**

Mitya awakens after a drunken spree with Grushenka and is slow to realize he is the prime suspect in a murder investigation, even as to who has been murdered. The interrogation that follows is an incredible scene, with Mitya alternately speaking as an insulted landowner, a wronged son, and a passionate man in pursuit of a wonderful woman. The investigators lay several traps for Mitya and he lands in every one of them with his continuous protestations and admissions. The interrogation covers a broad spectrum of Mitya's character, the view of Russian investigators regarding their law and the law of the Bible, and Russian society of class divisions. Mitya is treated differently because he is a landowner, but even this cannot protect him from the overwhelming evidence of witnesses.

Book Ten is devoted to the subplot of Ilyusha's bereft little family, so different from that of the Karamazov brothers. Ilyusha's father is shamed by Mitya, and the entire family suffers from Mitya's irrational behavior. Ilyusha's family eventually benefits, though, with the intervention of Katarina, Alyosha becomes a friend and brings the young man's boyhood friends to his side as Ilyusha is dying. In Book Ten, the theme of brotherhood and friendship is displayed and explored, with the individual boys finding their own

voices and rising above the normal childhood play to contemplate the goodness of people, the brevity of life, and to see a better part of themselves, all through the teachings of Alyosha. Alyosha sees his own life work through his interaction with the boys, and his talent for finding common ground with extreme personalities in every age.



# Part IV, Book Eleven, Chapter 1-5 , Part IV, Book Eleven, Chapter 6-10

## Part IV, Book Eleven, Chapter 1-5 , Part IV, Book Eleven, Chapter 6-10 Summary

Alyosha goes to see Grushenka, who has been very ill since the arrest. Grushenka tells Alyosha that she and Mitya have had another argument, this time about the Polish officers who are now asking her for money. They also argued about Mitya's new obsession about Katarina. Grushenka tells Alyosha that Ivan has been visiting Mitya and she was not supposed to tell Alyosha. Grushenka thinks Ivan and Mitya have a secret, and it is to do with Katarina. In Chapter 2, Alyosha goes next to the home of Madame Khokhlakov, and finds her in bed with a bad foot. It is known that Pyotr has been calling on her. In Chapter 3, Alyosha goes to meet Lise in her room. She is not in the wheelchair anymore, but she is not well. She is pale and yellow, and she talks about hurting people and being glad about it. She tells him of horrible things she has read, and how she takes pleasure in it. She gives Alyosha a letter addressed to Ivan. When he leaves, she smashes her own finger in the door.

In Chapter 4, Alyosha then goes to visit his brother Mitya, in jail, and discovers the secret is Ivan has encouraged Mitya to escape to America after the trial. Alyosha leaves in tears, headed to see Ivan. In Chapter 5, Alyosha decides to stop and see Katarina, and Ivan is there. The men talk, and Alyosha can see that Ivan is very ill. Alyosha feels compelled to tell Ivan that he is not the murderer. Ivan says of course he is not, but Alyosha continues to say it to Ivan, and Ivan thinks Alyosha has overheard him talking to himself about this. Ivan gets angry with Alyosha and tells him to leave him alone. Instead of going home, Ivan turns and goes to see Smerdyakov instead.

Ivan went to see Smerdyakov when he returned from Moscow, and his half-brother is still in the hospital during that time. Ivan wants to know if Smerdyakov faked his epileptic fit, and Smerdyakov says no. Ivan does not know what to believe. In Chapter 7, Ivan went to see Smerdyakov again, to ask him about some of his comments, and Smerdyakov says Ivan wanted someone to kill Fyodor, for money and for hatred. Ivan goes afterwards to Katarina and tells her he thinks Smerdyakov killed Fyodor, but she shows him a letter Mitya wrote her the day before the murder, where he confesses that he will kill his father. Ivan feels better, and then hears that Smerdyakov has become still sicker, so he goes to see him.

In Chapter 8, Ivan goes to Smerdyakov and it is clear the man is very ill. Smerdyakov finally confesses that he did kill Fyodor, but only because he believed Ivan wanted him to do so. He gives Ivan the three thousand roubles and Ivan leaves, saying he will tell the police and at the trial tomorrow he will expose Smerdyakov. Ivan goes home, in a blizzard, and when he reaches home he begins behaving very strangely. In Chapter 9, Ivan believes he sees a man in his room, and it is the same man who he has been





talking to repeatedly, but he does not say his name. Ivan believes he is now delirious and talking to himself. He identifies the man as Satan, and the two of them have a long involved talk about Russians, the soul, and the Satan becoming incarnate. Suddenly there is a knock on the window and it is Alyosha, who has come to tell Ivan that Smerdyakov has hanged himself. In Chapter 10, Alyosha remarks that Ivan looks very sick, and Ivan is raving about the Devil, and exclaims that he had been there. Ivan continues talking about the Devil, telling Alyosha he will go to the trial the next day and confess everything. Ivan becomes so delirious and incoherent that Alyosha puts him to bed and sleeps on the sofa nearby.

## **Part IV, Book Eleven, Chapter 1-5 , Part IV, Book Eleven,Chapter 6-10 Analysis**

With Mitya in jail, not rushing around the countryside stirring everyone up, the town seems able to find their own meaning and identity. Alyosha is beginning his system of mediation, acting as messenger and comforter and confidant to Grushenka, Ivan, Mitya and Katarina. Everyone in town seems to be ill, some with physical maladies, but others, such as Ivan and Lise, going slowly insane. It is difficult to tell exactly how Katarina and Grushenka feel about Mitya - are they in love with the man, or in love with the scandal and attention they are both receiving as a result of this love triangle? Ivan's descent into madness is triggered by conversations with Smerdyakov, his half-brother. The tendency of the Karamazov family to lose themselves in their passions is evident in these sections as Ivan struggles with religious fantasies, Smerdyakov gives into his cruel confusion, Alyosha chooses mankind over his own needs, Mitya follows every whim and passion that enters his head at the cost of his future, and Fyodor has died as a result of his passion for himself.

Here the insanity of Smerdyakov and Ivan is complete. Ivan the famous author and atheist is having long conversations with Satan, and Smerdyakov commits suicide after confessing to Ivan that he killed their father. The theme of Man versus God is explored here, as Ivan struggles mightily to keep his atheist beliefs, but cannot continue to argue with Satan. Satan appears to Ivan as a gentleman, wronged and misunderstood, who just wants to follow his dreams, and professes not even to know if there is a God. Satan in this novel symbolizes Ivan's guilt for not believing in the religion and passion of the Russian soul. Ivan has always felt apart from everyone and everything, and the dialogues he has with Satan are actually the arguments he is having with himself, to try to bring the two parts of himself together. He is unsuccessful, and descends even further into insanity.





## **Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 1-3 , Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 6-9**

### **Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 1-3 , Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 6-9 Summary**

The trial begins to a packed courthouse. When Mitya is asked if he is guilty of killing his father, he admits to being guilty of being a drunkard and a scoundrel, but not a murderer or thief. In Chapter 2, the defense attorney proceeds to examine each of the witnesses presented by the prosecution in a very effective way, damaging each testimony enough to create questions about what they say. In Chapter 3, the medical experts are called in, three of them, and their opinions are so different they are useless. The town doctor begins telling stories about Mitya as a young man, and remembers buying Mitya a pound of nuts when he was a little boy.

In Chapter 4, Alyosha is called to testify, and then it is Katarina's turn at the witness stand. She tells the story of how Mitya loaned her and her family five thousand roubles long ago, and that he did not need to repay her of the loan of three thousand that caused all this consternation. As she steps down, Mitya cries out that she has ruined him. Grushenka is the next witness. She provides little information of use to the prosecution or the defense, as she is mainly interested in defaming Katarina. The next witness is Ivan. In Chapter 5, Ivan begins his testimony normally, but soon begins speaking wildly about the devil, and then produces the three thousand that came from Smerdyakov, and tells them Smerdyakov did it. Ivan is taken out of the courtroom, delirious. Katarina chooses that moment to give the judge the letter Mitya wrote her.

When asked why she is bringing this information now and not when she was on the witness stand, Katarina begins denying everything she said before and is reduced to hysterics in her hatred for Mitya and her new-realized love for Ivan. She is removed from the courtroom, and so is Grushenka. The prosecutor begins his final speech talking about Russian society. In Chapter 7, the prosecutor continues his speech with laying out the facts in a logical manner, showing how Mitya came to the idea of killing his father a little at a time, until his mania took over and it happened. In Chapter 8, the prosecutor brings up the possibility that Smerdyakov killed Fyodor, and says it is not possible because of the fainting fit and illness. Ivan's testimony is refuted. In Chapter 9, the prosecutor finally finishes, and the townspeople discuss it as a good speech, but somewhat condescending to the peasants and Russians.



## Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 1-3 , Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 6-9 Analysis

The trial of the decade begins with all of Russia watching. The courtroom becomes a showcase for oratory, passion, romance and intrigue as witnesses tell their tale then recount it from the audience, doctors expound on their own theories and lapse into unrelated memories, and the newspapers carry slanderous and libelous stories. Mitya still seems oblivious to everything but how he looks to Katarina and Grushenka, and enjoys the attention he is getting from the entire country. Ivan's testimony could have cleared Mitya, but Ivan is too far gone to be of any use to his half-brother. Because of Smerdyakov's suicide, the one person who could have cleared Mitya is gone. The author uses the prosecutor's speech to summarize the plot, to reiterate the characters and their motivations, and to create a real question in the reader's mind about Mitya's guilt or innocence.

Mitya is a passionate and irrational man, a true sensualist. He is also prone to violence when angered, which is often, and possesses the strength and skill to commit murder. The prosecutor, Kirillovich, brings in not only the facts, but uses psychological analysis of Mitya, a field just coming into favor at this period of Russian history. The prosecutor is obvious about his dislike of the Karamazov family, and weaves together the plight of Russian society with Mitya being an example. Kirillovich presents the witnesses, and their testimonies are damaging. He ends his speech with the plea that the jury finds Mitya guilty and therefore stopping the fall of Russian society into a lawless state, like Europe.



# Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 10-14, Epilogue, Chapter 1-3

## Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 10-14, Epilogue, Chapter 1-3 Summary

The defense attorney begins his speech. In Chapter 11, the defense lawyer introduces a new point of contention: there is no proof there was three thousand in the envelope found on the floor, only hearsay. And why is Mitya not allowed to have any honor at all?

In Chapter 12, the defense lawyer continues with his pleas that they consider Smerdyakov as the murderer, and wants to know why no further investigation was done on him. Fetyukovich wants to create doubt in the minds of the jurors and he is so persuasive that at one point the courtroom rises and applauds him. In Chapter 13, the defense attorney discusses Fyodor, the deceased, and states this man was not an ideal father. The defense attorney charges the jurors with deciding not only the truth of Mitya's story, but also the truth of Russia herself.

In Chapter 14, the prosecuting attorney stands to object, and the crowd is not sympathetic to him. Kirillovich says Fetyukovich has countered one novel with another, and has just presented riddles as a defense. At this point, Kirillovich becomes loud and angry and begins quoting from the Bible, and the presiding judge reminds him to stay to the point, and within the appropriate bounds. It is then Mitya's turn to speak, and he says again he did not kill his father. He asks the court for mercy, and then sits down. As the jury goes into deliberation, the audience discusses the case and decides Mitya must be acquitted, and they applaud the oration of the defense attorney. The jury comes back after one hour and delivers their verdict, that Mitya is guilty of every count he has been charged with.

It is five days after the end of Mitya's trial, and Alyosha and Katarina are meeting to discuss the planned escape. Ivan is still terribly ill, and Katarina has him at her house. Alyosha tells Katarina that Mitya has asked to come see him. In Chapter 2, Alyosha goes to Mitya, and Katarina arrives soon afterwards, and Alyosha is shocked to see that Katarina is behaving as if she is still deeply in love with Mitya. Grushenka comes in moments later. Mitya urges Alyosha to run after Katarina, and he does, and Katarina says for him to leave her alone, and she will not come to the funeral. In Chapter 3, Kolya and the other boys are waiting for Alyosha to arrive so the funeral service for Ilyushechka can begin. Ilyushechka died two days after Mitya was sentenced. The boys pick up the small coffin and begin carrying it to the church.

During the funeral, Ilyushechka's father, Captain Snegiryov, is distraught to almost madness, and the boys have to hold him back after they are walking home from the burial because he keeps trying to run back to the grave. The Captain goes inside to be with the women of his family, and the boys and Alyosha go outside for a walk. They end



up at the stone where Ilyushecka and his father used to walk every day. Alyosha addresses the boys in a serious manner. Alyosha tells them to always remember this moment, this gathering, the kindness they learned in their friendship with Ilyushecka, how his father loved him, and the good feelings they all share right now. Alyosha and the boys join hands in good cheer and they all go back to Ilyushechka's house to have dinner with his grieving family.

## **Part IV, Book Twelve, Chapter 10-14, Epilogue, Chapter 1-3 Analysis**

Fetyukovich the defense attorney is a much better speaker than Kirillovich, and he manipulates the witnesses into looking foolish. Fetyukovich's best defense is that there was no money stolen and that the murderer was the deceased half brother, Smerdyakov. He also hints that Fyodor was worth being murdered, by whomever did it. He urges the jury, through Biblical quotes, legends and stories to seek the truth, to choose innocence for this man because there is doubt, and the truth they find will be a Russian truth. After these long, windy, self-important speeches, the reader is confused, which was the author's intention. There is sympathy for Mitya, because after all, everything he did was for love. The jury is not swayed, however, and declares Mitya guilty of all charges.

At the end of the novel, the author reminds us the story was originally about Alyosha, so the tale of Mitya, Katarina, Grushenka and Ivan is left with the four characters still muddled and confused about who loves who, and the ultimate fate of Mitya's escape plans are left to the reader's imagination. Alyosha emerges from the death of Zosima, Fyodor, and Smerdyakov, the imprisonment of Mitya, the illness of Ivan and the death of Iluysha. He is glowing and content in his love of God and for mankind and the earth. Alyosha is the one Karamazov whose sensualism is directed for good and unselfishness.

# **The Brothers Karamazov**

**Summary**

**Analysis**

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# Characters

## Alexey Karamazov

Alexey, known as Alyosha, is the youngest of the Karamazov brothers and an honest young man. Alyosha's earliest memory is of his mother praying to the Virgin Mary to protect him. After growing up away from home, he returns and visits his mother's grave. Later he decides to become a monk.

According to the narrator, he is the "future" hero of the book and of Russia. (In fact, Dostoevsky had planned a second volume focused on Alyosha.) Alyosha serves as a bridge between the corrupt past and a brighter future, as represented by the closing scene where the previously surly gang of boys surrounds him. The atheist Kolya is chief among them.

Alyosha is not a religious fanatic like Father Ferapont or a mystic like Father Zossima. In fact, Alyosha is considered a realist. The difference between Alyosha and Ivan is simply that Alyosha decides, "I want to live for immortality, and I will accept no compromise."

## Dmitri Karamazov

First son of Fyodor, Dmitri is raised by Gregory, the family servant. As a boy, Peter Miusov decides to give him the best education. When he loses interest, Dmitri is passed off on relatives. Having no other prospects, he pursues a military career.

Over the years, his father gives him money, yet never informs him of his net worth. Eventually, he discovers that he has spent all of his inheritance - according to Fyodor. Dmitri's inability to sort out his financial situation and stand up to his father eventually leads to his downfall.

Dmitri's voice can be funny or poetic, swaggering or humiliated. Psychologically, he is a man of passion and the senses, of the earth (Dmitri is from Demeter, goddess of earth, fertility and grain).

The lesson Dmitri learns is that only by the awakening of men like himself to Christian duty, can those in poverty and oppression (as seen in his vision) have a bright, fulfilled life.

## Fyodor Karamazov

Modeled upon Dostoevsky's own father, Fyodor is the patriarch of the Karamazov family. A cruel and miserly man, he is also a misanthrope and narcissist. He plans to use his formidable fortune to marry Grushenka.



Fyodor embodies "Karamazovism," that family trait of the Karamazovs referred to throughout the novel. It is the ability to throw oneself into dissipation - orgies, alcohol, and blasphemy - with wild abandon. According to Kirillovitch, the Karamazovs are emblematic of that element of Russian society whose spiritual side is undeveloped but which possesses an overwhelming vitality. Fyodor stands in opposition to those who hope to enlighten and reform Russia, like Peter Miusov.

## **Ivan Karamazov**

If Dostoevsky's novel is viewed as a novel of ideas, then Ivan, the middle brother, is the hero. He is a "morose and reserved" young man who recently graduated from the university. Besides the narrator's voice, his voice is the most frequent. Ivan, however, uses other narrative voices to express his thoughts - a devil, an Inquisitor, or a dry recitation of facts.

Ivan gets so caught up in polemics that he ends up in critical condition with a "brain fever." His apparent possession by a demonic being sheds light on the primitive state of neurology just prior to the revolutionary ideas of Sigmund Freud.

Like his father, Ivan prefers logic and facts; they prevent him from falling into a despair brought on by trying to make sense of a world full of absurdities. Therefore he collects facts in a notebook. In this, some critics and biographers assert that he resembles Dostoevsky.

Ivan is responsible for the most famous aspect of the novel, "The Grand Inquisitor." This "poem" is an internal monologue. As Ivan's mental suffering increases, he withdraws from society. He eventually suffers a mental breakdown.

## **Ippolit Kirillovitch**

Kirillovitch is the prosecutor who views this murder case as his swan song. He dies of consumption nine months after the trial.

## **Kolya Krassotkin**

Kolya is a potential Ivan. However, with the intervention of a strong spiritual man like Alyosha, Kolya can become a positive force in the future.

## **Michael Makarov**

Michael Makarov is a police captain. A man of little education and not altogether abreast of the recent judicial reforms, he is loved by the community for his dependability.



## **Marfa**

Marfa is Gregory's wife. A smart woman, she knows some herbal remedies that she uses several times a year when Gregory suffers from lumbago. The remedy consists of alcohol and is sleep-inducing, which is a key fact in Fyodor's murder.

## **Maximov**

Formerly a landowner, Maximov is a silly character down on his luck.

## **Peter Miusov**

A distant relative of Fyodor and Kalaganov, Miusov is a liberal freethinker, reformer, and an atheist. He is a landowner in the district and has spent considerable time abroad, especially in France. Hypocritically, his revolutionary acts benefit his financial interests, not humanity.

## **Captain Mussyalovitch**

Captain Mussyalovitch is a proud Polish officer who dumps Grushenka. Later he tries to reconcile with her in order to spend her money.

## **Father Paissy**

A learned and well-respected man, Father Paissy is a man of reason who assumes the role of Alyosha's spiritual guide.

## **Peter Perhotin**

Dmitri pawns his pistols to Perhotin, a young official who is launched on a bright career because of Dmitri's murder case. Perhotin directs the authorities to Mokroe.

## **Rakitin**

A sycophantic gossip, Rakitin (his name means pliable, like a willow branch) is willing to do anything to be "in the loop." He is a divinity student, but some predict he will eventually be a gossip columnist. He fulfills this destiny during Dmitri's murder trial.





## **Kuzma Samsonov**

Samsonov is an evil merchant who sexually exploits Grushenka. Now old and dying, he tries to encourage Grushenka to marry Fyodor. To facilitate the match he sends Dmitri to a man who would gladly give him the money he needs.

## **Lizaveta Smerdyastchaya**

The mother of Smerdyakov (his name means "the stinker"), Stinking Lizaveta is the town's child. An orphan with a mental disability, she was most likely raped by Fyodor. She dies giving birth to her son in a bathhouse. Gregory takes and raises the child.

## **Smerdyakov**

Smerdyakov is Fyodor's illegitimate son. Given different circumstances, Smerdyakov could have been Ivan's equal. Instead, his thirst for knowledge has been unsatisfied. Like Dmitri, Smerdyakov resents Fyodor. However, he represses his feelings and becomes Fyodor's trusted confidant to gain a better position. He plans out the murder.

## **Captain Snegiryov**

Captain Snegiryov is the town drunk.

## **Ilusha Snegiryov**

Ilusha is the proud son of Captain Snegiryov. He represents the innocent child destroyed by the world in Dmitri's dream. Protective of his family, he is embarrassed by his father's drunken antics. When Dmitri beats his father, the boy is tormented by desires for revenge. When Alyosha tries to befriend him, Ilusha beats him. Alyosha's nonviolent response surprises Ilusha. He races home and comes down with a cold. The cold worsens; before he dies, he reconciles with everyone and becomes a martyr for love and peace.

## **Stinking Lizaveta**

See Lizaveta Smerdyastchaya

## **Agrafena Svyetlov**

Known as Grushenka, she represents the ideal Russian beauty. She is the proper counterpart to the ideal man, Dmitri. Grushenka (whose name means light and bright) is dumped by a Polish officer and spurned by her family. With little to her name, a



merchant named Samsonov becomes her protector and she becomes his mistress until he is too old. She also helps him in his business and wisely invests any money that comes her way so that she is an independent woman.

Samsonov advises her to marry Fyodor for the money; however, she wants to marry Dmitri for love. When the Polish officer returns she thinks she is still in love with him but discovers he only wants money. Throughout the novel, Katerina and Grushenka are enemies until Katerina helps Dmitri.

## **Father Zossima**

Born into the upper class, Zossima becomes an officer until, in his haughtiness, he hits his servant. He asks for forgiveness, considered an incredible act. The next day he refuses to return fire in a duel. He resigns his commission and becomes a monk who wanders the country for twenty years. Eventually, he makes his home in the monastery and tries to reinvigorate the institution of the Elder.

Word of his greatness spreads far and wide. Many predict he will be a saint and they unsuccessfully look for evidence of miracles.

## **Dmitri Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov**

Dmitri Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov also known in the novel as Mitya, Mitka, Mitenka and Mitri Fyodorovich, is the eldest son of Fyodor Karamazov, and older half brother to Ivan and Alyosha. Mitya is a passionate man whose main occupation is following his heart's desires, whether it be Grushenka or Katarina, or drinking or following some mad scheme to acquire money from his father.

Mitya is twenty-eight years old, and is very strong, yet looks sickly most of the time because he is always engaged in some struggle to obtain what he wants, and he is never really positive about what or whom he wants. Mitya was born to Fyodor's first wife, Adelaida Ivanovna, and completely abandoned by his father when his mother passes away, and is protected by his father's elderly servant, Grigory for over a year. His mother's cousin, Pyotr Alexandrovich Miusov decides for a while to become Mitya's guardian, but he too loses interest after a while. As a result, Mitya grows up being passed from one distant relative to another, and finally joining the army. Mitya grows up believing himself to be a wealthy man of property, and leads a wild life of imagined entitlement. His father allows him to obtain funds along the way, letting Mitya continue to think this is an unending well from which he may draw. However, his father is purposely allowing Mitya to extinguish his mother's inheritance and now has no money in reserves. Mitya moves back to the town where he was born and begins passionate and sometimes violent negotiations with his father to get more money. Mitya then meets and falls in love with the seductress Grushenka, and this is where the story begins.

Mitya is not a shy or reserved man, often erupting into long dialogues about the right of a man to pursue happiness, and whether or not God will forgive him for following his



passions. Mitya is the type of character who is not to be ignored when he enters a room, or even a town. His physical behavior reflects his emotional state as he rushes, flies, pushes his way around the town, declaring his love for Katarina and Grushenka, and announcing loudly he will kill his father.

Mitya has no knowledge of budgeting his money, controlling his passions, caring for others, or taking care of himself. He alternately loves and hates his brothers and his friends. He despises his father, but is remarkably similar to the man he hates. Both Mitya and Fyodor are self-centered and hedonistic, putting their problems and concerns as the first priority, and expecting everyone around them to do the same.

Mitya is a charmer, though, and through his occasional generosity of spirit and roubles, he often has ardent supporters amongst his many detractors. Katarina and Grushenka both shun more reasonable and appropriate suitors for Mitya throughout the novel.

Mitya believes his father to owe him three thousand roubles, and once these are obtained, Mitya thinks he can pay Katarina back and have money to run off with Grushenka. His father is his rival for Grushenka, and unbeknownst to Mitya, Ivan is his rival for Katarina. Mitya is consistently refused by his father for the money and threatens to kill him. Grushenka is playing the two men, father and son, against each other for her own amusement. When Fyodor is indeed murdered, Mitya is arrested, tried and found guilty. At the end of the novel, Mitya is planning for escape to America with Grushenka, with the assistance of his brothers.

Mitya's character is central to the novel, and his behavior and choices propel the other characters to be introspective and to correct their perceptions and actions; however, Mitya does not change at all during the ordeals he suffers. He is selfish at the beginning, middle and end of the novel, and with only tiny bursts of kindness or compassion, he parades through the pages with bravado, considerable verbosity, demands for attention, and impulsive irrational acts.

## Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov

Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov, also known as Alyosha, Alyosha, Aloyshenka, Alyoshechka, Lyosha, and more, is described as twenty years old, handsome, slender, tall, with brown hair and bright deep gray eyes. His demeanor is usually serene and calm.

The narrator says Alyosha is the hero of the novel. Alyosha is the youngest of Fyodor's three legitimate sons, with Mitya and Ivan the older brothers. Alyosha was born to Fyodor's second wife, Sofia Ivanovna, who left Mitya for another man and died a few years later. Sofia's benefactress found out about the deplorable conditions under which Ivan and Alyosha were being raised by Fyodor, and brought them both to live with her. When she passed away, the boys were handed from one relative to another, and ended up with a provincial marshal who took good care of the boys and ensured their



education. When he passed away, the boys were already at university and did well for themselves.

Alyosha is a kind and compassionate young man, who truly believes in the best of everyone and loves all people, animals, the Earth, etc. Early in his life he makes the acquaintance of a benevolent monk named Zosima, who recognizes the spirit of Alyosha as someone who can be guided to make a difference in the world. Zosima teaches Alyosha and encourages him to be a monk. Alyosha is from a family known for its love of the flesh and sensuality, but his nature is more of one who is giving and good, and always thinking of others.

When the Karamazov family comes to Zosima for consultation, Zosima sees great troubles ahead for the men. He advises Alyosha to leave the monastery and go into the real world, because he will be needed, and it will make him more ready to be a monk later. Alyosha accepts his elder's advice, and when Zosima passes away, Alyosha puts up his monk robes and becomes a gentleman. He wanted to marry Lise, but she turns out to be highly unsuitable for him.

Alyosha's character changes dramatically throughout the course of the story. He begins as a very naïve young man who is devoted to his Elder, and was committed to a life in a monastery. Through observing and experiencing his brothers' disastrous attempts to deal with love and life, Alyosha learns how to be sympathetic and understanding to them, but not to be like them.

Alyosha is the glue that holds this passionate and headstrong family together, and the novel traces his actions as he goes from Mitya to Ivan to Katarina to the monastery and around, trying to prevent problems that are inevitable.

## **Ivan Fyodorovich Karamazov**

Ivan is the son of Fyodor, and the middle brother, with half-brother Mitya being older and full brother Alyosha being younger. Both Ivan and Alyosha were abandoned by their father and passed through homes of various relatives until they were of age to go to university. Ivan, though, always realized he was a burden to others, and grew reserved and silent. He managed his newspaper contacts well, and wrote pamphlets and articles that were well received. Unlike Alyosha, Ivan was an avowed atheist, although later in his life he began seeing the devil and conversing with him.

Ivan is good looking and professional in his demeanor. He is well respected by his colleagues and writes poetry and books. He has come home from Moscow at the urging of his brother Mitya, to serve as a mediator between Fyodor and Mitya. This task rapidly becomes impossible, as Ivan finds himself courting Mitya's rejected fiancé Katarina, becoming embroiled in theological discussions with Alyosha and the monastery, and trying to deal with Mitya's wild and unexplainable behavior.



Ivan's cool reserve is broken little by little through the story, and he is reduced from being a professional intellectual to a ranting crazed person who must be confined to his bed.

## **Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov**

Fyodor is the father of Mitya, Ivan and Alyosha, and is described by the narrator as a muddleheaded madcap. He marries twice and both marriages are a disaster, but he continues to romance most of the women in the surrounding countryside, earning a reputation as a debaucher and sensualist. As a wealthy landowner in Russia during the class system, he is forgiven and his misadventures overlooked as he spends his entire life following his own base passions. Fyodor is a horrible father, forgetting about the children completely and others must rescue the boys. Fyodor feels he is entitled to do whatever he wants with no limits on his needs. Late in life, he falls in love with Grushenka, a young woman of questionable background, who teases him mercilessly, allowing him to think he has a chance at her hand in marriage.

Fyodor has an illegitimate son as well as his three sons by marriage, Smerdyakov. He treats this son no better than the others, and never recognizes him as a son, choosing instead to employ him as a servant in his home. It is the bastard son, Smerdyakov, who actually murders Fyodor, under the misconception he is doing it with Ivan's approval and encouragement.

Fyodor's character undergoes no improvement whatsoever in the course of the novel, and it is his manipulation of others, his despicable behavior and selfishness that causes others to plan and carry out his murder.

## **Grigory Vasilievich Kutuzov**

Grigory has been Fyodor's servant for many years, and his attitude towards Fyodor is faithful, but he does not back down from telling Fyodor when he is doing something wrong. Grigory was instrumental in raising all of the sons, but is childless himself. He has been married to Marfa Ignatievna for many years as well, and she assists him in serving Fyodor. Grigory is a stern, disciplined man who sees everything only in black or white.

Grigory plays a pivotal role in Mitya's murder trial, as he is the one who Mitya ran into when leaving his father's house and garden. Grigory was badly injured by Mitya, and his testimony is damning.

## **Zosima**

Zosima, also called the Elder, was instrumental in Alyosha's life as a mentor. Zosima was well known as a wise man who could almost see into the future, and he could heal people with just a word or a touch. At the beginning of the story, he is already failing in



health, and soon dies. His death and his teachings have a profound effect on Alyosha, and on the townspeople as well.

## Smerdyakov

This young man is the son of Lizaveta Smerdyashchaya, a woman who was also known as Stinking Lizaveta. She was a crazy person who roamed the town and was tolerated. Fyodor was the father, but he never claimed Smerdyakov. The boy heard the town talk about him, and eventually he became Fyodor's servant. Grigory and Marfa raised him, but he was never grateful for their kindness. He was cruel to animals, intelligent but sullen, and most people in town find him disturbing.

Smerdyakov has a girlfriend, Marie, and he plays guitar. He appears to admire his older brother Ivan more than anyone, and tries to figure out what Ivan would want to happen about Fyodor. Ivan, on the other hand, is completely unaware of this devotion from his half-brother.

Smerdyakov often has epileptic fits, and fakes one on the night Fyodor is murdered. Well after Mitya has been arrested for the murder and is about to stand trial, Smerdyakov is actually extremely ill, and confesses to Ivan that he murdered Fyodor. That night, Smerdyakov commits suicide.

## Katarina Ivanovna

Katarina is also referred to as Katya in the novel. Katarina is a beautiful young woman, considered to be well bred and of a good class. She has large black eyes and a pale face, and most men in the novel find her attractive. She is friendly, passionate about Mitya, and given to hysterics.

Katarina falls in love with Mitya when he manipulates a situation to make her think he is saving her family from disgrace. She becomes his fiancée, and when they all return to the village where Mitya's father lives, she begins receiving a number of visitors and gentlemen callers, but her devotion is for Mitya. Mitya, on the other hand, has since fallen in love with Grushenka, and is lost to her.

Katarina does not deal with these matters gracefully, but sits at her home commanding Alyosha and Mitya and Ivan to alternately do her bidding, and tries to manipulate Grushenka into leaving her fiancé alone. She gives Mitya money and defends his behavior. In the meantime, she begins to believe she is falling in love with his brother, Ivan.

Katarina is forced to be shamed in front of the entire village by Mitya's incessant pursuit of Grushenka while still being engaged to Katarina. He sends her messages through his brother and others that he is done with her, but does not tell her himself because he owes her three thousand roubles.



When Mitya is arrested for murdering his father, Katarina provides lawyers and doctors at her own cost to assist him, enjoying thoroughly the role of martyr. All the time, she is continuing to see Ivan and treat him more as her fiancé. During her original testimony, she is forgiving and protective of Mitya, but after Grushenka testifies, Katarina screams from the court audience and offers a letter from Mitya as evidence that he did indeed kill his father. She must be taken from the courtroom. When Ivan collapses, she moves him into her house, and continues the plans for escape for Mitya. Alyosha asks her to see Mitya one more time, at Mitya's request, and is as surprised as the reader to see that Katarina professes her undying love for Mitya once again.

Katarina's character does not go through any revelations in this book. She is naïve and protected and coddled by the men in her life, and her opinion is not respected by anyone. She is held up as a shining example of womanhood, admired and pampered, but she is unable to stay on course, allowing hysterics and her overwrought emotions to sway her like the wind.

## **Grushenka (Agrafena Alexandronov)**

Grushenka is also referred to as Grusha in the novel. She is a young, vivacious woman who exudes sexuality and knows the power she has over men. She has long beautiful hair, an innocent expression, and a singsong voice. She is admired by all the men she meets as well, but she is on a lower class level than Katarina. Because of this, and the circumstances of her young life, Grushenka has needed to keep her wits about her and use her talents to survive. Mitya recognizes the sensualist in Grushenka and knows she is much better suited for his wild ways than the beautiful Katarina.

Grushenka has had many admirers, young and old in her life, but five years before she moved to the village, she had been courted and fell in love with a Polish officer. After allowing her to believe they were to be married, he deserted her. An older man, Kuzma Samsonov, becomes her patron, teaches her how to invest money, and makes sure she has a home and servants. He is old and dying, and now Grushenka needs to think of her future.

Mitya wants to marry Grushenka, but he is penniless; Fyodor wants to marry Grushenka and he is wealthy, but disgusting. While she plays these two against each other, the Polish Officer has sent her a letter asking her to join him, and will be sending a carriage. Although Grushenka seems to care deeply for Mitya, she boards that carriage with only a message to Mitya via Alyosha.

Grushenka is cleverer than Katarina, but allows her emotions to guide her life as well. She leaves Mitya for the Officer, but when Mitya rides a carriage full of rich food and liquor to come after her, she is impressed and turns her affections back to him. During the trial and afterwards, she tortures Mitya with questions about his faithfulness to her.





At the end of the novel, Grushenka has committed to run away to America with Mitya, but the reader must wonder at how successful these two characters would be at any serious committed relationship.

## **Madam Katerina Osipovna Khokhlakov**

Madam Khokhlakov is a fortyish woman who is the mother of Lise, a young sometimes crippled girl. Madam takes her daughter to see Zosima for healing and advice, and is there the day the Karamazov family shows up for counseling. Madam is also the owner of the house where Katarina is staying, and involves herself totally in the relationships between Katarina and Mitya, Katarina and Ivan, Alyosha and Lise and even begins a romance of her own with Pyotr Ilyich.

Madam Khokhlakov is not an intelligent woman. She misunderstands most of what is told to her, and does not perceive that she has misled Mitya into thinking she is going to loan him the infamous three thousand roubles when she tries to convince him to go off and find gold mines. She is far too concerned with how things look rather than how things really are.

Madam's character is not well drawn here and the author's tendency to refer to her only as "Madam" and her last name. However her character's dialogue is used to fill many pages, and to lead the reader away from the action of the novel.

## **Pyotr Ilyich**

Pyotr is a man in service to the government, and becomes critical in the novel when he pays Mitya for his dueling pistols and owns them for a short time, until Mitya changes his mind and retrieves them. The interaction between Mitya and Pyotr is perplexing to Pyotr, who tries to sort it out after Mitya leaves. Pyotr's subsequent investigation that night results in Mitya's arrest, and Pyotr's meeting of and following romance with Madam Khokhlakov. Pyotr's role in the novel is to turn the village's attention to the fact there is a crime and a criminal, not just the usual fuss and drama of Mitya.

## **Mikhail Osipovich Rakitin**

Rakitin is in the shadows of the action most of the time, somehow involved in the meeting between Zosima and the Karamazov family, and encountering Alyosha often as he crosses the town looking for his brothers or Katarina. He seems to hold a minor role until the time of the trial, when it is discovered he has become a writer for Rumors newspaper, and he is detailing the lives and loves of the village to the entire country of Russia.





## Ilyusha Snegiryov

Ilyusha is a young schoolboy who, when first introduced in the novel, is angry and being teased by older boys. He responds by throwing rocks at them, then at Alyosha who is trying to break up the fight. Alyosha follows him to find out why he is so angry, and Ilyusha bites him. Alyosha finds out later that Ilyusha is the son of a man shamed in public by Mitya several days before. When Ilyusha recognizes Alyosha as a Karamazov, he takes out his anger at him. Alyosha soon finds himself in the position of going to Ilyusha's family home and giving money to the shamed father on behalf of Katarina, who has heard of the shame and is trying to make amends. This begins a great friendship between Alyosha and the family, and he brings the other boys to be friends once again with Ilyusha, who is dying of consumption.

Ilyusha is a typical little boy, with compassion for animals, love of guns and cannons, and the desire to be surrounded with friends. He is especially admiring of Kolya, and as Ilyusha's life ends, all of his buddies are with him, his dog has been returned to him and his father and family are wealthier.

## Kolya Krasotkin

Kolya is an older boy who has befriended Ilyusha, turned away from him because of his bad behavior, but goes back to be his friend at the end. Kolya represents a young socialist in the novel, because even at fourteen, he has definite opinions about his country, religion and is unashamed or reserved about voicing them.

## Ippolit Kirillovich

Kirillovich is the prosecuting attorney in the case, and he holds a long standing grudge against the Karamazov family because his wife admires them all. He presents a very long and convincing argument for the state, outlining the evidence and establishing motive.

## Fetyukovich

Fetyukovich is Mitya's Defense Attorney, brought in from Moscow at great expense, to save Mitya from twenty years of hard labor in Siberia. Fetyukovich is highly skilled and refutes every witness. He controls the mood of the trial, and he has a great oratory voice. He convinces the audience that Mitya is a victim of circumstances, there was no money stolen, and someone should have murdered Fyodor long ago, yet it was not his client who committed the deed. Yet, Fetyukovich is robbed from his victory when the jury comes back with a guilty verdict on all counts.

## The Narrator

The person telling the story is never named, but speaks in first person as he tells the story, an omniscient point of view. The reader does know the narrator lives in the town, was present at some of the events, and even disappears at times in the story, only to reappear with a first person comment, an apology or an observation.



## Objects/Places

### Skotoprigonyevsk

This is the name of the town where the narrator and all the characters live. It is not a city, but not a village, being fair-sized. Its main claim to fame is being the home to a monastery that attracts very wise men to live and work there. The name of the town is not revealed to the reader until Page 573, when the articles written by Rakitin appear under the heading "From Skotoprigonyevsk" and the narrator admits he was concealing it all this time. The town is located near Mokroye and Chermashnya and within a train's ride of Moscow.

### Monastery

The monastery is home to Zosima, Alyosha, Father Perapont and many other monks. It consists of their cells, a church, a graveyard and some gardens, surrounded by woods. It is outside the town, but within walking distance.

### Karamazov Home

The home is located not in the center of town, but close enough to walk. It had once been beautiful and was large, but Fyodor had of course neglected it. There are several rooms, stairways and closets. Rats are invading it, but Fyodor laughs and says they are company for him at night. This house is where Fyodor lives, with Smerdyakov sleeping on a couch outside the room, and Grigory and his wife occupying a small cottage next door. Ivan stays there on his first visit, but none of the sons wish to live there. It is a house, not a home.

### Three thousand Roubles

This amount is symbolic because it represents the amount Mitya owes Katarina, and the amount with which Fyodor tempts Grushenka. It is also the amount Mitya is said to spend on Grushenka both times they visit Mokroye.

### Grushenka's Lace Shawl

This shawl is of fine lace, beautiful, and Grushenka looks glamorous when wearing it. She chooses to wear it often in the company of men, and it has a decided effect on them. The shawl represents the air of class and quality that Grushenka wants to surround herself with; however, once the shawl comes off, it is the same woman with her same crude ways.



## Envelope

The envelope is the one Fyodor used to wrap the three thousand roubles in, and is left torn open on the floor when the murderer steals the money. Its location in Fyodor's house is also a mystery, and it is revealed that only Smerdyakov, Mitya, Fyodor and Grushenka even knew it existed, but only the two dead men ever really saw the money inside the envelope.

## The Garden

The garden located in Marie's back yard is used by Mitya as a way to spy on Grushenka in case she decides to go to Fyodor. This is also where Alyosha comes to find Mitya when he was looking for him.

## Pestle

The pestle is a bronze object of décor that is grabbed by Mitya when he is in Marie's house threatening to kill her if there is no news of Grushenka. Mitya pockets the pestle and then uses it to hit Grigory when he is at his father's house. It is found, covered with blood, a few feet away from Grigory, and is also assumed to be the weapon used to kill Fyodor.

## Lise's Wheelchair

Lise is paralyzed at the beginning of the story, and is wheeled around on a large chaise lounge. She recovers enough to get around without the chair later in the story, but the lounge is still in her room, and she is lying on it when Alyosha comes to talk to her, and she reveals her demented thoughts to him. The wheelchair symbolizes the paralyzed state of Lise's mind. It is bent and twisted, and she cannot love.

## Zosima's Cell

Zosima does not live in the monastery, but in a cottage not far away. It has a large porch on the outside, built to accommodate the people who are constantly waiting to see him. His cell is very simple, a large room for meeting and a bedroom. It is furnished by old worn furniture, and icons. Its simplicity and lack of wealth is symbolic of the soul of Zosima, comfortable yet not pretentious.



# Themes

## Man and God

There are many discussions in the novel about God's law and how it should be administered in the governmental court system. Ivan wrote an article that becomes a treatise for the religious community, and he is an atheist.

In the closing speeches of the defense and prosecuting attorneys, God's will and God's law is mentioned frequently, as the soul of Russia.

In the middle of the novel, all action and plot is suspended while the author devotes three chapters to homilies and talks of Zosima the Elder.

Everyone in the novel is preoccupied with their place in the world, whether it be local society or their chances of going to heaven or hell. God's law is heavy on their minds, and when Ivan the atheist begins losing his mind, it is Satan who visits with him and has long conversations.

The author's message is clear, that man is constantly questioning whether or not there is a God, and if so, what is His purpose for us, and how shall we use that information to govern others.

## Man versus Self

Fyodor does not worry too much about his reputation as a sensualist. He revels in it, and presents himself as a buffoon to make it even more difficult for people. Mitya, however, believes himself to be a good man, just driven to obtain what he justly deserves to have. Mitya constantly questions himself and questions others about himself, but he secretly is happy with himself, happy with his decisions, and is just troubled by getting the money to get what he needs.

Alyosha also participates in considerable introspection of his own motives and behavior. He often compares himself to his mentor, and to Biblical stories. But his internal conflict is not serious, just reflective as he moves through life, loving everyone. Ivan has an internal conflict regarding his views of God, and although he is so reserved and calm, it eventually drives him completely mad.

Katarina and Grushenka suffer no such problems as they seldom think beyond the man they are currently seeing in their parlor.



## Brotherhood and Friendship

When Alyosha first meets Ilyusha, the young man is angry, friendless and attacking everyone because the father he loves has been shamed. Through understanding, listening and bringing all of the boys together, Alyosha manages to create a band of schoolboys who are devoted to each other, to learning, and to making Ilyusha's last days happy and fulfilling.

Alyosha truly does love everyone, and continues to support his brothers even if they are misbehaving. He embraces the true meaning of brotherhood, to stand behind your family right or wrong. He is the only one Fyodor ever says he loves. Kolya thinks a lot of himself, but at the end commits to a friendship with Alyosha and with Ilyusha.

At the end of the novel, this theme is played out in a touching scene where Alyosha is speaking to the young men, extolling them to remember these days of kindness, of the brotherhood between these friends.

## Soul of Russia

Russia was often depicted as a cold and faceless land whose people were out to get the United States during the Cold War. This novel is a translation from its original Russian, and the theme of Russians thinking of Russia as a mother, of a combined soul of hundreds and thousands of passionate people, is played again and again in this novel. Russia is held up as an example, an excuse and a reason for every action. Drunkenness is a Russian trait that is to be tolerated and forgiven. The Russian schoolboy who is arrogant and difficult is applauded. The soul of Russian men and women is presented to be passionate, deep, and proud. In their conversations, the Russians in this novel speak at length about their souls, their beliefs, and refer to stories, legends and authors to explain their point.

Russia at this time is ripe for socialization and communism, and though neither of these political ideologies were dominant in the time of its writing, the author seemed to know what the Russian people were discussing at the time, and how these concepts would become vitally important as the country grew and became more of a world power.

## Sensualism

Sensualism, or hedonism, is one of the main character traits explored by the author in this novel. Fyodor is the head of the family of four brothers, and his life is a testimony of heedless descent into selfishness, cruel ridicule, and concern of nothing but his own needs and desires. Fyodor abandons all four sons and when they do come back into his life, he manipulates and steals from them.

Each of the sons takes a measure of sensualism from their father's example, even while reviling him for his behavior. Mitya is the most obvious of this behavior, as he follows his



passion for women, wine, finery and gluttony as far as his funds will take him. When his funds are cut off, he threatens murder to get them back. Mitya's speeches are passionate about love, but the true love he has is for himself.

Ivan seems to be the practical one, but his penchant for analysis, for exactitude and logic is his undoing. He loves Katarina, but denies himself her love, and loses her repeatedly back to Mitya. Ivan publishes his beliefs, expounds on them constantly, but eventually is torn in half by his concentration on what is right, what is wrong, and whether or not God exists.

Smerdyakov appears to be a true sociopath, knowing the difference between right and wrong, but choosing to ignore it. He has no gratitude to Grigory for raising him, none to Fyodor for employing him, and only has a curious attachment to Ivan. Smerdyakov's sensualism was similar to Ivan, going deep inside himself to find only madness and hatred there.

Alyosha, the hero of the story, is the only character who grows and acknowledged his sensualism in a mature fashion. Alyosha chooses to spend his passion by turning it to compassion for mankind and the earth



# Style

## Point of View

The story is told through an Omniscient Point of View, via a narrator who is never identified. The reader knows the narrator lives in the town, knows all the parties involved, and was present at some of the events. However, through an Omniscient point of view, the narrator also knows everything about all the characters.

The reader is given the circumstances through the eyes of all the major and minor characters, providing a complete view of all action, important conversations and secrets. As a result, this book is rich in emotions, observations, descriptions and motives.

The protagonists are Alyosha and Mitya, while the Antagonists are Fyodor and at times, everyone in the town. The narrator repeatedly says the story is about Alyosha, his hero, but the point of view often travels to other characters.

## Setting

The Brothers Karamazov is set in mid 18th century Russia, and 90% of the story takes place in a town called Skotoprigonyevsk. Through the descriptions of the town and its people, the author creates a mood of brooding sensuality, gossiping older women, arrogant schoolboys, and frequent visitors. The town is presented as a normal Russian town, but is seething with secret affairs, law-breaking landowners, quiet gardens, and a range of economic and social backgrounds.

The country of Russia is described and touched upon so often by the author it almost plays the role of a minor character.

## Language and Meaning

The Brothers Karamazov was originally written in Russian. It took Fyodor Dostoevsky three years to write, completing in 1880. Richard Prevar translated it into English in 1990, and this is the version reviewed.

The book uses relatively few Russian words, which is good, because just figuring out the names of the characters can be quite a challenge to the reader. For example, Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov is the name of the hero of the story, yet he is referred to by the name Alyosha, and every character in the book could be called by at least two other names, depending on the formality and the relationship to the character by the speaker.

There are many references to other authors, Biblical passages, phrases are spoken in Polish and French, and the translator felt it necessary to supply an 18-page section





entitled "Notes" at the end of the book, and has annotated several phrases, passages and words throughout the novel.

The language of the novel is predominantly simple, and the author does have a good vocabulary. Officials and landowners speak very eloquently, while the words of the servants Grigory and Smerdyakov are shorter, and their orations are brief. The author uses conversations and soliloquies of the major characters to project his themes, for plot devices, and for characterizations; therefore, sometimes when a character begins speaking, he does not stop or is not interrupted for several pages at a time.

The author seems more intent in describing a character's attitude and their outlook towards spirituality than he does on a simple description of their appearance. Very little of the book is dedicated to describing anything or anyone beyond what a reader basically needs to know.

## Structure

The Brothers Karamazov is 776 pages long, and is broken up considerably, first into Four Parts and an Epilogue. Each Part is divided into Books, which are then divided into Chapters. Some of the chapters are even more divided. Each Part, Book and Chapter is titled.

The book is divided up minutely; for example, the prosecutor's speech fills three chapters. Dialogue is the author's chosen form of moving the plot along, characterization and themes. A character's thoughts are exposed in statements and one-sided conversations that continue for pages at a time with no interruptions from their audience.

Part I of the book sets the stage for what the author refers to as the "catastrophe", telling the reader of each character involved, their life story, their disposition and their thoughts. The town, the monastery, Russia and all the characters are introduced and finely drawn in these Books and Chapters.

Part II is where the conflict is more increasingly outlined for the reader, creating tension and foreshadowing the event. Here also is where some of the intrigue revolving around the catastrophe has their beginnings and revelations. Part II also devotes time to Alyosha's meeting with Ilyusha, and the beginning of that subplot.

Part III begins with the funeral of Zosima and marks the point where Alyosha must change his life. Mitya's frantic pursuit of three thousand roubles and of Grushenka is detailed in this part of the book, as is the murder of Fyodor and Mitya's arrest.

Part IV goes first into the stories of Alyosha and his boys, then into Ivan's troubles, then to the trial. Book 12 is especially long, as it involves the trial and everything everyone said about it, even the courtroom audience's reactions.

The Epilogue, which is usually offered by an author as a short update on the characters, is instead used by this author to honor Alyosha and his good heart, then to hint at the possibility of Mitya and Grushenka escaping to America, but leaves the reader wondering what happens to these two.



# Historical Context

## The Romanovs

In 1689 Peter the Great assumed the throne in Russia. His attempts to modernize Russia were not entirely successful, but he did manage many reforms before his death in 1725. Another reform-minded leader, Catherine the Great, resumed the task of modernization in 1762.

From 1801 to 1825, Alexander I continued in the path of Peter and Catherine. He granted amnesty to political prisoners and repealed many restrictive laws. Under Alexander's reign, Russia increased in size and power. When Napoleon marched on Moscow in 1812, he found the city burned to the ground and, with no supplies and winter setting in, he retreated. The Russian army routed Napoleon's troops using guerrilla tactics.

In 1826 Nicholas I adamantly opposed liberal ideas and Western thought. He instituted secret police, strict censorship, and the removal of all controversial materials from educational institutions. Writers were arrested, university chairs in history and philosophy abolished, and student bodies reduced. Meanwhile, he reformed the economy and compiled the first set of Russian laws since 1649. In 1854 the Russian military forces were defeated by an international army of Turkish, British, French and Sardinian troops in the Crimean War (1854- 1856).

In the tradition of Peter, Alexander II reduced restrictions on higher learning. He reformed the judiciary, instituting Zemstvas in 1864. A Zemstva was a system of local self-government responsible for education and public welfare. Throughout the 1870s Russia resumed its struggle with Turkey over the Dardanelles, a struggle it eventually lost.

After 1881, Alexander III reintroduced censorship and strengthened the police force. The Zemstvas were curbed, assimilation was forced on minorities, and assaults began in earnest on the Jewish population through a series of pogroms which kill hundreds.

The last of the Romanovs, Nicholas II, started his reign in 1894. Although he had the best of intentions, the populace assumed that he was under the influence of Rasputin, a mysterious religious leader. After a loss to Japan in 1904, his rule was in danger. On January 22, 1905, his troops fired on thousands of peaceful protesters. Hundreds were killed.

## Revolution

Under the reign of Alexander I, secret organizations and societies formed and influenced Russian culture and politics. For example, the Decembrists called for an end to Czarist leadership and advocated a constitutional monarchy or a republic. They



attempted to take control of Russia when Alexander I died but were crushed by Nicholas I. Another group, the Nihilists, advocated a complete abolition of the present state. Revolutionary activity increased under the tolerant reign of Alexander II.

Revolutionary groups grew more educated, organized, and focused. Industrialism created a class of factory workers open to communist ideas. This group would eventually overthrow the Romanov dynasty in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Though Alexander allowed the revolutionary groups to exist, they were not content with the pace of reform. In 1881, Alexander was assassinated by a revolutionary.

## Russian Serfdom

A serf was a person who was legally designated servile to his landlord. Unlike a slave, a serf could have inherited property, bequeathed wealth, and bought his way out of serfdom or of some servile duties. Dictated by local custom, service included fighting for the landlord in combat and allowing the landlord to sleep with one's daughters.

With the rise of the merchant class in Europe and evolution of feudal societies into constitutional monarchies, serfdom declined. Descendants of serfs rose to the middle class and social mobility increased. In France, serfs gradually vanished as a result of the French Revolution. Yet the practice survived and grew more repressive in Russia. Spurred by revolutionaries, serfs revolted throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in Russia.

The most notable series of revolts occurred during the disastrous Crimean War in 1854. Finally, forty million Russian serfs were liberated when Alexander II ordered their release in 1861. Even though free by law, many peasants remained second class citizens in reality - an issue explored in *The Brothers Karamazov*.



## Critical Overview

When *The Brothers Karamazov* was published in 1881, critics and readers were shocked by the controversial nature of the novel. For example, a negative assessment in *Temple Bar* contends that the work would "add nothing to [Dostoyevsky's] reputation." Vladimir Nabokov was even less impressed. He deems the novel "quaint" and "weird" though he liked the random phraseology of the chapter headings. Furthermore, a review in *The Spectator* deems the novel "disordered," although it is "the most carefully composed of [Dostoyevsky's] novels, the constructions seems often to collapse entirely; there are the strangest digressions and the most curious prolixities."

Not surprisingly, most of the critical commentary on the novel focuses on the problem of faith and religion. There is quite a bit of commentary discussing the ideas presented by the fable of the "Grand Inquisitor" alone.

D. H. Lawrence, in his *Preface to "The Grand Inquisitor,"* maintains that complete devotion to Christianity is impossible because it expects too much from its followers. Accordingly, Ivan's position is not evil but honest. Ivan rediscovered something "known until ... the illusion of the perfectibility of men, of all men, took hold of the imagination of the civilised nations." That something is, "that most men *cannot* choose between good and evil."

Hans Kung, in his "Religion in the Controversy over the End of Religion," views Dostoyevsky as a prophet who "was convinced that the Europe of Western science, technology, and democracy needs Russia's spirituality and conciliating power in order to find its way to a new, free unity."

The novel interests psychologists because they are concerned not with the crime, as Sigmund Freud maintains, but with "who desired it emotionally and who welcomed it when it was done." According to Freud, in *Dostoyevsky and Parricide, The Brothers Karamazov* is the "most magnificent novel ever written."

Freud asserts that the artistic "formula for Dostoyevsky is as follows: a person of specially strong bisexual predisposition, who can defend himself with special intensity against dependence on a specially severe father." Even more profound, "it can scarcely be owing to chance that three of the masterpieces of the literature of all time - the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, should all deal with the same subject, parricide."

Besides discussions regarding the novel's themes of religion and psychology, critics consider the characters of the story. Prince Kropotkin contends that with so many characters suffering from "brain and nervous diseases," the novel appears unnatural and fabricated. Further, he asserts that the novel has "here, a bit of morals, there some abominable character taken from a psycho-pathological hospital ... that a few good pages scattered here and there do not compensate the reader for the hard task of reading these two volumes."



Camus views *The Brothers Karamazov* as "a work which, in a chiaroscuro more gripping than the light of day, permits us to seize man's struggle against his hopes." Some critics assert that allegory is more important than characters in the novel. Others note the appearance of the twentieth-century hero - solitary, rebellious, and possibly dangerous.

Critical commentary also focuses on Dostoyevsky's narrative technique. J. Middleton Murray, in *Fyodor Dostoyevsky: A Critical Study*, asserts that *The Brothers Karamazov* is not "an encyclopedia of Russian life" but a confused and chaotic symbolic tale.

Ralph E. Matlaw disagrees with this assessment in his *The Brothers Karamazov: Novelistic Technique*. He maintains that "the minutiae of the novel are as carefully controlled ... as the thematic and structural lines."

Victor Terras, in *A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis, Language, and Style of Dostoyevsky's Novel*, agrees with Matlaw and employs Mikhail Bakhtin's (in *Fyodor Dostoyevsky*) concept of narrative polyphonics. Terras traces the many layers and subtleties of meaning in the novel, asserting that, "the trial of Dmitri ... is an allegory of Dostoyevsky's effort" to persuade the jury of mankind that the "cognitive power of the creative imagination" is the most powerful.

Throughout the years, critics grew to appreciate Dostoyevsky's accomplishments with *The Brothers Karamazov*. In particular, his use of multiple voices is viewed as an effective and innovative narrative technique. Furthermore, his exploration of religious and psychological issues is considered influential for many twentieth century authors and philosophers. Today, *The Brothers Karamazov* is considered one of the more important works of world literature.

# Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2



# Critical Essay #1

*Esdale is a doctoral student in the Poetics Program at SUNY-Buffalo. In the following essay, he explores the role of religious faith in The Brothers Karamazov.*

If you have watched any television, you know that murder mysteries and courtroom dramas are popular shows. You also know that real murder trials are televised. The issue with these shows is often not whether the defendant is guilty or innocent, but if the trial is entertaining. Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, is an entertaining murder mystery, both for the reader and for the characters in the novel.

The question of whether Dmitri Karamazov is guilty or innocent of his father's murder is treated very seriously. Critics have typically focused on the novel's presentation of the crisis of religious faith in the nineteenth century; in particular, the characters debate the very existence of God and the implications of the answer. For example, if God does not exist, then guilt, innocence, and sin are meaningless. The critics note that Dostoevsky refuses to give a simple answer to this universal question. Instead, there is a compromise: if God's existence cannot be accepted, then people must accept the world as it is.

Dostoevsky attempted to write a novel that incorporated all aspects of Russian society: rich and poor, men and women, believers and nonbelievers. Since the character of Dmitri seems to represent the average Russian, the question of his guilt can be perceived as a question of the nation's guilt. If Dmitri is judged guilty, then all are guilty. If he is judged innocent, then all are innocent. Dmitri is "wrongly" judged guilty. His attorney maintains that "the overwhelming totality of the facts is against the defendant, and at the same time there is not one fact that will stand up to criticism." In other words, the Russian people are guilty, but the individual is innocent.

Novels influenced by *The Brothers Karamazov* provide insight into Dostoevsky's book. Franz Kafka, for example, loved Dostoevsky's novel; his novel *The Trial* (1925) chronicles the story of Joseph K., or just K., who wakes up one morning to find that he is under arrest. Yet no one can tell him exactly what crime he committed. His attempts to find information are circumvented by a confusing legal system that functions to hinder, not help, defendants.

K. never learns the nature of his crime; therefore, he cannot adequately defend himself. He meets other defendants whose trials drag on for months and years with no final verdict in sight. K. realizes that the court assumes his guilt and that he is in danger of lingering in the complex legal system for years.

However, a certain logic is at play here: if everyone is guilty, then no one person can be held responsible. Since you cannot punish everyone, no one is punished. The final verdict - everyone is under arrest, and also innocent - has for many readers become prophetic, symbolically describing the world today.





Realistically, someone has to be guilty since we always look for someone to blame - usually a person without power. The verdict in *The Trial* contradicts the Christian account of original sin in the first family: after Adam and Eve were exiled from the Garden of Eden for disobedience to God, they became mortal and passed on that mortality to their children. Children are born guilty of their parents' sin. For this reason there is animosity between generations, since many children blame their parents for the burden of guilt. Inevitably, children will rebel against their parents.

According to Sigmund Freud's account of human origins, which describes the tension within the Karamazov family, a son or a group of sons desire to kill the father because the father has exclusive privilege over all women. Competitive instinct governs family interaction. Dmitri is charged, however, with parricide (the killing of a family member), not patricide (the killing of the father). Parricide opens itself to the possibility that any murder is like a family murder.

Adam and Eve's first son, Cain, commits parricide when he kills his brother Abel out of sibling rivalry. And in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Claudius kills his brother - Hamlet's father - to gain the throne of Denmark. Parricide emphasizes that a murder affects more than just the victim. It affects the other family members - like the members (people) of a body (nation). So much attention has been given to the family in literature because the family can be regarded as a small community, or miniature nation. What happens in a family can be said to mirror - with the distortions that all mirrors create - the state of a nation.

An account of the world that claims everyone is innocent then argues against Christian scripture, and claims also that God is dead. This conclusion is likely true of *The Trial*, but *The Brothers Karamazov* is more ambiguous. Three characters in Dostoyevsky's novel quote Voltaire, an eighteenth-century French philosopher: "If God did not exist, he would have to be invented." This hypothesis has lingered and turned up in the most unlikely places, such as on the wall of a New Orleans brothel in the 1969 film *Easy Rider*.

The solution to this hypothesis is of course beyond us; we can only speculate. Fyodor, Ivan and young Kolya all invoke Voltaire's popular hypothesis, and all three are mocked at times for their credulity - believing that if it comes from a book, it must be true. Kolya also asks a question at the heart of the novel: "It's possible to love mankind even without believing in God, don't you think?" Ivan provides an answer that each character will test for himself and herself: "it is not God that I don't accept; it is the world that he has created." Ivan despairs that "everything except man is sinless," and with this disavowal in mind decides that "everything is permissible."

As Dmitri is accused of having murdered his (earthly) father, Ivan can be accused of having murdered God the Father. Richard Peace has noted that "Ivan's father becomes a sort of sacrificial substitute for God." Ivan participates in the events of Fyodor's murder and, at least initially, believes himself to have been innocent because it is not possible to be guilty of killing someone who is already dead: Fyodor had effectively killed himself years before when he rejected the responsibilities of fatherhood - like God. If God has



forsaken you and the generation before you has already killed everything, why should what you do matter?

Enter Smerdyakov, Fyodor's bastard son, a character that in many ways makes this novel relevant today. He represents disaffected youth, those alienated from their parents and from themselves, a demographic that has become so stereotypical in the last few decades. Smerdyakov murders the father who had disowned him from birth, but who had consented to employ him as one of the servants. What might have been a familial relation was reduced to an economic relation. A man without a family and an inheritance, Smerdyakov is aimless until Ivan asserts that "everything is permissible."

This reading of the world permits Smerdyakov to kill Fyodor and then flee to France. It is he who will play God and punish people for their pride - he says to Ivan, "It was your pride made you think I was stupid." Yet to create a new life Smerdyakov would have to erase his terrible crime; he would have to claim that he was innocent.

At the end of the novel, once Dmitri has been convicted and sentenced, a plan is put into motion that would have Dmitri escape to America - the ideal place to start again. Americans killed their symbolic fathers - rules that limit freedom, such as God, class, ethnicity, gender or all origins altogether - and are not obligated to pay the debt of history. Yet does eliminating the patriarchal system also alleviate the obligations of mutual responsibility people feel toward each other, toward animals, and toward the earth? Without a symbolic father figure, will the family implode?

The novel suggests that one method of accepting this mutual responsibility is to treat adults as children, and children as adults, which means that fathers would become brothers, and mothers become sisters. Exchanging positions in the family and becoming mutually responsible for each other dismantles one of the primary hierarchies (the Family) that structure inequalities into the human community.

After Cain kills his brother, he responds to God's question about Abel's existence: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Because Cain failed to recognize his responsibility to his brother, God marked Cain and sent him out of the community (as proof that he was always and already outside) - like Hester Prynne in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), who is cursed to wear a scarlet "A" to signify her crime of adultery. The Karamazovs are similarly marked: in Russian, *kara* means "punishment" and *mazov* comes from *mazat*, which means "to daub or smear."

Since one of the central questions at Dmitri's trial is whether all Russians are Karamazovs, the title of the novel is suggestive: *Brothers Karamazov* may include a community larger than a single family. A monk or nun willingly takes on the mark of sin, as Christ did, believing that all have sinned. To believe that "all are guilty" is to take that step nuns and monks take towards participation in the larger brotherhood and sisterhood beyond the family. To believe instead that "all are innocent" is to decide that there is no community. Conforming to society's values and laws then becomes optional, and can lead to anarchy.



To believe both at the same time - and become a sort of monk or nun in the world instead of in the monastery - is a possibility explored in the novel. In doing so, the characters begin to accept degrees of belief and degrees of guilt, and reject absolute belief or guilt. Because laws exist absolutely, however, they exist in conflict with exceptions to those laws. No single explanatory system (such as Christianity) can fully explain the complexity of a world of competing brothers, or competing instincts. You cannot find absolute truth in a book - either in the Bible or *The Brothers Karamazov*. Reading a book is a solitary pursuit. Truth must be constructed in dialogue with others.

One Father would be the author himself, Dostoevsky, and the monument of his great book. In this book Fatherhood is put on trial and the author questions his own authority by employing what his foremost critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, has called *dialogism* ("dia-" is two or more, and "-logue" is to speak). Bakhtin focuses more on the novel's form than its religious philosophy, but the two aspects are related. He has noted that "Capitalism created the conditions for a special type of inescapably solitary consciousness" by alienating us from the things we make and from each other, but that this solitary consciousness is a fantasy and an illusion. A solitary consciousness, or *monologism* ("mono" is one), claims to know the one Truth; it claims that everyone is entitled to her or his own opinion or truth, but in so claiming there is no conversation. No one listens.

Freud's theory of narcissism, which explain how people think only of themselves, offered to the twentieth century a life - not of innocent intentions - but innocent of its own intentions. Freud does not deny guilt, but maintains that there are other, psychological reasons for behavior that go beyond guilt and innocence. The mechanisms that operate the mind, like those that operate a piece of machinery, are neither sinful nor innocent in themselves.

Monologism is natural in capitalist America; in this country you can perhaps too easily claim to be innocent, and that others are to blame. Dialogism instead accepts both guilt and innocence as shared amongst the members of a family or nation. In effect, Dostoevsky kills the author-Father himself by opening up the novel form to multiple or dialogic consciousness, constituted collectively by the author *and* the characters. In this way, the hero in a dialogic novel becomes a collective hero.

Bakhtin says that a Dostoevsky novel develops itself - and cannot finally ever conclude itself - by creating a hero who takes a position on the world, and draws other people into dialogue with that position. Out of that dialogue certain shared truths emerge.

Although Dostoevsky's world is largely mechanistic, without God and innocent of its own intentions, it still demands that we intuit and respect other people's truths and move beyond monologism.

The declared hero of the novel is Alyosha, who describes the events of thirteen years ago to the narrator. Yet the narrator also witnessed many of the events, and often claims to be recording what he or she saw and heard.

With all these methods the book is almost literally composed collectively, and its conclusion is an exemplary instance of a chorus of voices: the young boys are gathered by Alyosha in both a fatherly and brotherly manner, and as they shout tributes of love they are asked to remember always this moment before they go their separate ways. Such moments might happen infrequently in their lives - in our lives too, so the reader is also drawn into the chorus, and we are entreated to remember the experience of having read this book.

**Source:** Logan Esdale, in an essay for *Novels for Students*, Gale, 2000.



## Critical Essay #2

*In the following essay, McMillin presents a critical overview of The Brothers Karamazov.*

*The Brothers Karamazov* was Dostoevskii's last great novel, bringing to culmination many of the themes of his earlier fiction, such as the debate between religion and atheism, the battle between good and evil in the hearts of 'broad' Russian characters, clashes of incompatible rival women, the ever-fascinating legal process, and, above all, Dostoevskii's longstanding attempts to create a 'positively good man' capable of leading Russia's spiritual regeneration. Moreover, the three brothers seem to reflect the three main stages of the author's life: Dmitrii, his youthful Romantic period; Ivan, his attachment to atheistic socialist circles; and Alesha, his spiritually reborn post-Siberian period.

The longest of the novels, *The Brothers Karamazov* is also one of the most tightly constructed, topographically exact (the town of Skotoprigonevsk is closely modelled on Staraia Russa where Dostoevskii spent his last years), and chronologically compact: the main action of the book takes place over a period of only three days, but with much interleaving of narration as we follow the lives of the three brothers in long, intercalated sections with a constant feeling of acceleration driving the action on. Each brother in turn, with the aid of significant dreams (and, in Ivan's case, delirium), learns important facts about himself and, for all the narration's pace, the reader shares a strong sense of epiphanic development.

The novel's main theme is the nature of fatherhood. On the one hand we have the saintly elder Zosima, a spiritual father to Alesha, the youngest brother; on the other the irresponsible, scheming, lecherous Fedor Karamazov, a father in the biological sense alone, whose possible murder is a topic of discussion from early in the book. This crime, once committed, provides a source of guilt for all of his sons: Alesha, the novice sent out into the world by Zosima, who for all his Christian goodness cannot avert the parricide; Dmitrii, cheated by his father and a rival for the favours of the amoral Grushenka; and Ivan, the haughty intellectual, spiritual descendant of Raskol'nikov, whose formula 'if God does not exist, then all is permitted' falls onto the receptive ears of his bastard half-brother, the lackey Smerdiakov who, in fact, proves to be the actual perpetrator of the crime.

As a detective story this chronicle of smalltown life is handled in masterly fashion with concatenations of circumstances and fatally coincidental sums of money all seeming to impugn the passionate Dmitrii, who is eventually tried and condemned. Rarely, if ever, has the tension of mounting circumstantial evidence been portrayed in such a gripping manner (Dostoevskii was inspired by a comparable real-life case). His response to the new legal system in Russia adds particular vividness to the description of the trial, in which not only Dmitrii, or even the Karamazov family, but effectively the whole of Russia is judged before the world.



*The Brothers Karamazov* was Dostoevskii's last attempt to create a 'positively good man'. Father Zosima, though charismatic, is, perhaps, too pale and other-worldly for this role, but Alesha, through counselling distressed adults and children, gains authority as the novel progresses, and it is with him that the book ends. More memorable, however, is his brother Ivan's exposition of the reasons for rejecting God's world: the examples he adduces of gross cruelty to innocent children make his 'returning of the ticket' to God very persuasive. His principal thought is expressed in the 'Legend of the Grand Inquisitor,' a profound and disturbing meditation on Christianity, free will, and happiness, at the end of which Alesha kisses his brother, just as Christ had responded to the Inquisitor with a silent kiss. Subsequently Ivan's brilliant Euclidian mind proves unable to resist a mocking petty bourgeois devil and he falls into insanity. In the world of Dostoevskii's novels Christianity and the intellectual have a purely negative relationship.

Dmitrii, aware that his nature contains elements of both the Madonna and Sodom, shares his father's impulsive, passionate character but none of his cynicism or buffoonery. Dmitrii's romance with Grushenka, who also alternates between satanic pride and self-abasement, voluptuousness and spiritual sublimation, makes this one of the great love stories in all literature. Also fascinating are all three brothers' relations with two other mentally troubled women, Katerina Ivanovna and Liza Khokhlakova, revealing a disturbingly dark side of passion first seen in *Igrok (The Gambler)* but also encountered in ensuing novels, particularly *The Idiot* and *The Devils*. The depiction of these women's behaviour together with the parricide itself strongly attracted the professional interest of Sigmund Freud.

*The Brothers Karamazov* is a rich and fascinating text containing crime, passion, psychology, religion, and philosophy. It is indeed one of the great novels of the world.

**Source:** Arnold McMillin, "*The Brothers Karamazov*," in *Reference Guide to World Literature*, second edition, edited by Lesley Henderson, St. James Press, 1995.

## Quotes

Part I, Book One, A Nice Little Family, Chapter 4, The Third Son, Alyosha, Page 21, The Narrator:

"Here, perhaps, is the only man in the world who, were you to leave him alone and without money on the square of some unknown city with a population of a million, would not perish, would not die of cold and hunger, for he would immediately be fed and immediately be taken care of, and if no one else took care of him, he would immediately take care of himself, and it would cost him no effort, and no humiliation, and he would be no burden to those who took care of him, perhaps, on the contrary, would consider it a pleasure."

Part I, Book One, A Nice Little Family, Chapter 5, Elders, Page 27, The Narrator:

"What then is an elder? An elder is one who takes your soul, your will into his soul and into his will. Having chosen an elder, you renounce your will and give it to him under total obedience and with total self-renunciation."

Part I, Book Two, An Inappropriate Gathering, Chapter 1, They Arrive at the Monastery, Page 43, Zosima to Fyodor

"Be at ease, and feel completely at home. At above all do not be so ashamed of yourself, for that is the cause of everything."

Part I, Book Three, Sensualists, Chapter 3, The Confession of an Ardent Heart. In Verse, Page 108, Mitya

"Can there be beauty in Sodom? Believe me, for the vast majority of people, that's just where beauty lies - did you know that secret? The terrible thing is that beauty is not only fearful but also mysterious. Here the devil is struggling with God, and the battlefield is the human heart."

Part I, Book 3, Chapter 6, Smerdyakov, Page 127, The Narrator

"These impressions are dear to him, and he is most likely storing them up imperceptibly and even without realizing it - why and what for, of course, he does not know either; perhaps suddenly, having stored up his impressions over many years, he will drop everything and wander off to Jerusalem to save his soul, or perhaps he will suddenly burn down his native village, or perhaps he will do both."

Part I, Book 2, An Inappropriate Gathering, Chapter 2, The Old Buffoon, Fyodor:

"Precisely, precisely, all my life, I've been getting offended for the pleasure of it, for the aesthetics of it, because it's not only a pleasure, sometimes it's beautiful to be offended - you forgot that, great elder: beautiful!"





Part IV, Book 10, Boys, Chapter 1, Page 531, Kolya:

"Peasants differ," Kolya observed to Smurov after some silence. "How was I to know I'd run into a smart one? I'm always prepared to recognize intelligence in the people".

Part IV, Book 10, Boys, Chapter 7, Ilyusha, Page 561, Ilyusha:

"And don't ever forget me, papa, visit my grave..and one more thing papa, you must bury me by the big stone where we used to go for our walks, and visit me there with Krasotkin, in the evenings...And Perezvon...And I'll be waiting for you...Papa, papa!"

Part II, Book 5, Pro and Contra, Chapter 4, Rebellion, Page 245, Ivan:

"I don't want harmony, for the love of mankind I don't want it. I want to remain with unrequited suffering. I'd rather remain with my unrequited suffering and my unquenched indignation even if I am wrong. Besides they have put too high a price on harmony; we can't afford to pay so much for admission And therefore I hasten to return my ticket. And it is my duty, if only as an honest man, to return it as far ahead of time as possible. Which is what I am doing. It's not that I don't accept God, Alyosha, I just most respectfully return him the ticket."

Part IV, Book 7, A Judicial Error, Chapter 6, The Prosecutor's Speech:  
Characterizations, Page 694, Kirillovich

"But what is most important is that a great number of our Russian, our national, criminal cases bear witness precisely to something universal, to some general malaise that has taken root among us, and with which, as with universal evil, it is already very difficult to contend."

Part IV, Book 7, A Judicial Error, Chapter 13, An Adulterer of Thought, Page 748,  
Fetyukovich:

"Let other nations have the letter and punishment, we have the spirit and meaning, the salvation and regeneration of the lost. And if so, if such indeed are Russia and her courts, then - onward Russia! And do not frighten us with your mad troikas, which all nations stand aside from in disgust! Not a mad troika, but a majestic Russian chariot will arrive solemnly at its goal. In your hands is the fate of my client, in your hands is also the fate of our Russian truth."

Epilogue, Chapter 3, Ilyushechka's Funeral, The Speech at the Stone, Page 774,  
Alyosha:

"You must know that there is nothing higher, or stronger, or sounder, or more useful afterwards in life, than some good memory, especially a memory from childhood, from the parental home."



## Adaptations

*The Brothers Karamazov* was made into a silent film in 1918 by Dmitri Buchowetzki and Carl Froelich in Germany. Irmgard Bern and Fritz Kortner were in the cast.

The second German adaptation of *The Brothers Karamazov* was directed and scripted by Erich Engels. The 1931 film starred Fritz Kortner (again) as Dmitri and Bernhard Minetti as Ivan.

William Shatner made his film debut in the 1958 English production of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Adapted by Julius J. Epstein and directed by Richard Brooks, the film also starred Yul Brynner and Maria Schell.

A Russian production of the novel was made in 1968. Ivan Pyryev wrote the adaptation. Kirill Lavrov and Mikhail Ulyanov directed the film. Ulyanov and Lavrov also starred in the film, which was nominated for a best foreign film Oscar in 1970.



## Topics for Further Study

Dostoyevsky had a profound impact on many twentieth-century authors like Albert Camus, Richard Wright, and Franz Kafka. Select a novel by one of these authors and write an essay tracing Dostoyevsky's influence.

There are many references throughout the novel to religious lore. Pick a few of them and research the full stories. How do these references impact the story? Are they relevant to modern American readers, or are these stories ignored?

Define the concept of the ideal Russian woman. Compare Grushenka and Katerina in terms of this concept.

Dmitri reluctantly considers escaping to America. What does America represent in this context? Has the impression of America changed?

How does the story of Ilusha's lost dog reflect the concerns of the novel as a whole?



## Compare and Contrast

**Late 1800s:** The forefather of Russian communism and Marxist philosopher, Georgy Plekhanov, fled to Western Europe in 1880.

**Today:** Russia is developing democratic institutions based on the American model.

**Late 1800s:** There was a great famine in the agricultural regions of Russia from 1891-1892.

**Today:** Agricultural problems are still frequent in Russia due to poor infrastructure, inadequate resources for private farms, and a lack of credit sufficient to finance farming.

**Late 1800s:** The United States experienced an industrial revolution that would catapult it to the fore of manufacturing by the twentieth century.

**Today:** The United States is in the midst of an information revolution that has created significant economic benefits. These innovations have changed the way people communicate and do business in the twenty-first century.



## What Do I Read Next?

*Notes from the Underground* (1864) marks a turning point in Dostoyevsky's thought. It was written in reaction to Nikolay Chernyshevsky's utopian novel, *What Is To Be Done?* Here, Dostoyevsky outlines the moral universe that he will explore in the rest of his writings.

Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* was published in 1866. This crime novel chronicles the moral struggles of an impoverished student, Raskolnikov, who kills his landlady for money. This novel is considered a masterpiece.

Published in installments between 1875 and 1877, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* tells the story of a tragic love affair in late nineteenth-century Russia.

In Russia, a landowner must pay a soul tax on his serfs - though they are dead - until the next census. Such absurdities inspired Nikolay Gogol's 1842 masterpiece, *Dead Souls*. Gogol's satire about an enterprising young man who is trying to buy social mobility through prospecting on such dead souls gave Russian literature garnered critical and commercial popularity.

Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1862) explores the generation gap. The protagonist is a young intellectual nihilist who believes only in the laws of natural science; much to his chagrin, he falls prey to emotions such as love and unhappiness.



## Topics for Discussion

The author uses one verse from the Bible, John, Chapter 12, verse 24: "Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." How does the verse apply to the Karamazov brothers and their interactions?

Compare Ivan to Alyosha, the atheist to the holy man. Which man is more intelligent?

Struggling with religion was an every day, every moment occurrence with the characters of this book. Why was it so important to them?

Which woman was better suited to be the life partner of Mitya?

The author describes each son of Fyodor as a Sensualist. Is this true? How? Examine how each son: Mitya, Ivan, Alyosha and Smerdyakov behave in a manner that leans to their sensual side.

Was the Elder Zosima a great thinker or a great communicator?

What role does Madam Khlokhlov play in the novel? Is her character really necessary?

Why do the three doctors who examine and give testimony about Mitya disagree so completely?

Why did the jury convict Mitya?

Do you believe Mitya and Grushenka escape to America and live happily ever after? Do you think Katarina and Ivan marry?

## Further Study

Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, translated by Matthew Ward, Vintage Books, 1989.

An ordinary man is drawn into a senseless murder. Camus explores the use of the stranger archetype.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Possessed*, translated by David Magarshack, Penguin USA, 1954.

First published in 1871, this is Dostoyevsky's first major novel. Thematically, it concerns politics, atheism, and murder.

Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, Schocken Books, 1998.

In this novel, Joseph K. is faced with imprisonment, but never informed of his crime. The story explores the psychology of bureaucracy and its impact on the human condition.

Jean Paul Sartre, *The Age of Reason*, Vintage Books, 1992.

Famous for his theories of existentialism, Sartre examines freedom and responsibility in his philosophical treatise.

Richard Wright, *Native Son*, Harper Perennial Library, 1993.

A crime novel influenced by Dostoyevsky, Wright debates psychological theories in this story of a young man charged with a crime.



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Albert Camus, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* Vintage, 1991, pp. 93-118.

Sigmund Freud, in *Dostoyevsky and Parricide*, translated by D. F. Tait, Basic Books, 1959, pp. 222-42.

Prince Kropotkin, "Gontcharoff; Dostoyevsky; Nekrasoff," in *Russian Literature*, McClure, Phillips & Co., 1905, pp. 151-90.

Hans Kung, "Religion in the Controversy over the End of Religion," in *Literature and Religion: Pascal, Gryphius, Lessing, Holderlin, Novalis, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Kafka*, edited by Walter Jans and Hans Kung, translated by Peter Heinegg, Paragon House, 1991, pp. 223-42.

Ralph E. Matlaw, in *The Brothers Karamazov: Novelistic Technique*, Mouton & Co., 1957, pp. 20-33.

J. Middleton Murray, in *Fyodor Dostoyevsky: A Critical Study*, Russell & Russell, 1966.

Richard Peace, in *Dostoyevsky: An Examination of the Major Novels*, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

*The Spectator*, Vol. 109, No. 4396, September 28, 1912, pp. 451-52.

*The Temple Bar*, Vol. 91, February, 1891, pp. 243-49.

Victor Terras, in *A Karamazov Companion: Commentary on the Genesis, Language, and Style of Dostoyevsky's Novel*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1981, pp. 100-09.



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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

### Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

### How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

### Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

### Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

### We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: [ForStudentsEditors@gale.com](mailto:ForStudentsEditors@gale.com). Or write to the editor at:

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