

Dead Souls Study Guide

Dead Souls by Nikolai Gogol

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Plot Summary

Dead Souls, by Nikolai Gogol, is a satirical examination of 1800's Russian nobility and society. The work is often called Gogol's greatest. It is also considered a Russian prose poem. In post-Napoleonic Russia, landowners owned serfs who worked the land. A man's wealth was not only determined by the amount of land he had, but also by the number of souls he owned. Tchitchikov, the protagonist, and proclaimed hero of the story decides to purchase dead souls in order to become rich. Because a census is taken every year, he can buy the souls cheaper and then claim the dead souls as his own. The novel follows the exploits of Tchitchikov as he travels throughout the Russian countryside in the quest to buy souls from wealthy landowners.

As the novel begins, Tchitchikov, a collegiate scholar, arrives in the town of N. At once, everyone in town is excited that a stranger has come to visit. Tchitchikov goes to visit many influential people and makes a very good first impression on all of them. He gets numerous invitations to go and visit new friends who live on the countryside. No one in the town of N knows Tchitchikov's true reasons for his visit.

Tchitchikov first goes to see Manilov, who is quite taken with Tchitchikov. He wishes nothing more than to be very close friends with him. In order to accomplish that, he readily agrees to sell Tchitchikov souls. Tchitchikov then decides to visit Sobakevitch, another man he met in town. Tchitchikov first gets waylaid by a storm and is forced to seek refuge at the home of Madame Korobotchka. The next day, Tchitchikov begins talking with the woman. He feels he can trust her and asks if she would also like to sell him her dead souls. Madame Korobotchka wishes that he would buy something else of hers but agrees to sell him the souls. Tchitchikov again sets out to visit Sobakevitch before he gets off track again.

Tchitchikov decides to stop for food at the local tavern and runs into Nozdroyov, another man that he met in town. Nozdroyov is very charming and persuades Tchitchikov to visit his home. After dinner and drinks, Tchitchikov tells Nozdroyov about his plan. He immediately regrets doing so because Nozdroyov becomes cocky and rude. He refuses to sell the souls to Tchitchikov. He then challenges Tchitchikov to a card game; when Tchitchikov refuses him, Nozdroyov becomes violent. Tchitchikov only escapes because a police officer comes to arrest Nozdroyov for getting into a brawl a couple of nights before. Tchitchikov quickly flees.

Tchitchikov then decides to finally make his way Sobakevitch's house and then decides to return to the town. Once he arrives, he makes his purchases of the dead souls final. Tchitchikov cannot believe his good luck. He has now purchased over four-hundred souls. Soon, news travels all throughout the town that Tchitchikov is a very rich man. Everyone wants to talk about him. At a ball given by another influential man in town, Tchitchikov is the only topic of conversation. As Tchitchikov tries to enjoy the ball, Nozdroyov enters the ballroom. He begins shouting at Tchitchikov about the dead souls. Everyone is very perplexed. They do not know what Nozdroyov is talking about.



The next day Tchitchikov falls ill, so he is not able to go on his normal visits. To his dismay, however, Madam Korobotchka comes into town; she is dreadfully afraid that Tchitchikov has charged her too much for the dead souls. Soon word spreads all over town that Tchitchikov is actually buying dead souls. Other vicious rumors are also spread about Tchitchikov. He is so embarrassed about the news that he flees.

In the second part of the novel, Tchitchikov is still traveling through Russia attempting to buy dead souls. He again collects many influential friends and clings to them for their money, power and success. Tchitchikov continues to scheme and come up with short-lived plans to get more money but only ever accomplishes fleeting success. As the novel ends, Tchitchikov has stolen money from a dying woman and is being charged and arrested for his actions. Only because of his wealthy and powerful friends, is he released.



Part One: Chapter 1, (pages 5-18)

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Dead Souls, by Nikolai Gogol, is a satirical examination of 1800's Russian nobility and society. The work is often called Gogol's greatest work. It is also considered a Russian prose poem. In post-Napoleonic Russia, landowners owned serfs, who worked the land. A man's wealth was not only determined by the amount of land he had, but also by the number of souls he owned. Tchitchikov, the protagonist, and proclaimed hero of the story decides to purchase dead souls in order to become rich. Because a census is taken every year, he can buy the souls cheaper and then claim the dead souls as his own. The novel follows the exploits of Tchitchikov as he travels throughout the Russian countryside in the quest to buy souls from wealthy landowners.

The novel opens with Tchitchikov arriving in the town of N. Tchitchikov's chaise pulls up to a local hotel and instantly the whole town is abuzz- not because Tchitchikov is especially rich or good looking, but because he is something new and novel. When he arrives at a hotel, the workers begin prepare a room for the stranger. Tchitchikov travels with two other male servants - Selifan, his coachman and Petrushka, his footman.

As Tchitchikov wanders around his room, he surveys the entire suite. It consists of a common room (living room) and bedroom. The narrator describes the room as the same as any other room that a traveler might inhabit. The narrator observes that the only difference in this room are the pictures on the wall. Tchitchikov then decides to have dinner. As he begins to eat, he converses with one of the servants at the hotel. He asks one of them about the owner of the hotel as well as other prominent people in town. This list includes the governor, public prosecutor, president of the court of justice and others. Tchitchikov also asks the servant how many souls these important men own. When he says souls, he actually means peasants. The servant, not wanting to displease the pleasant foreigner, obliges him with descriptions of the wealthy people in town. The servant is quite taken with Tchitchikov and will do whatever he can to please him.

Tchitchikov listens to everything the servant says, making sure to memorize the information. He then decides he must see the town for himself. He excuses himself from lunch and tells the waiter his full name is Pavel Ivanovitch Tchitchikov. The visitor begins to wander around the town viewing different buildings. The next day, he decides to visit different important people in the town. While visiting each dignitary, Tchitchikov is careful to compliment them on their standing and profession. He also lets his host do most of the talking. Tchitchikov reveals very little about himself. He is also sure to make himself seem very insignificant compared to his hosts.

Tchitchikov is very popular in town. He is invited to dine at the police-master's. There he meets a thirty-year-old jolly landowner named Nozdryov. Tchitchikov certainly seems to



be the toast of the town because he is invited to the home of the president of the court for dinner, as well as other important people's home.

The narrator reveals that everyone does seem quite enthused about the new collegiate councilor, but they will soon be surprised by his true reasons for a visit.

Part One: Chapter 1, (pages 5-18) Analysis

In the very first chapter the reader is introduced to the personable and kind, collegiate scholar named Tchitchikov. The entire town is abuzz over his arrival. It is here that the narrator is also introduced. Almost immediately, the narrator begins to make his opinions and wishes known. It is also clear to the reader that he is not getting an unbiased view of the situation.

It also seems a little strange that everyone in town has become so interested in the new visitor. While they are small town people, they are also very important people. Why are they bothering themselves over a scholar? Gogol also foreshadows what Tchitchikov's business is and makes the reader curious and thoughtful.



Part One: Chapter 2 (pages 18-38)

Part One: Chapter 2 (pages 18-38) Summary

After a week, Tchitchikov decides to go and visit the various contacts he has made throughout the town. Some people do not live in town, but instead live in rural areas around the town. At this point in the novel, the narrator again interrupts to tell the reader about Tchitchikov's two servants Selifan and Petrushka. He does not want to interrupt the reader, but the narrator feels he must only mention them because they will be present in their master's story.

Petrushka is Tchitchikov's footman. He is very intelligent and enjoys reading and writing. This is different from others of his class. Because Petrushka is only a servant, he wears the same outfit everyday. This outfit usually consists of the same jacket, shirt and pants. Many times, Tchitchikov will comment on how badly Petrushka smells.

The narrator talks about Selifan, the coachman but then forgets to finish his description of the coachman when he thinks the reader has become bored with hearing of servants. He quickly switches the story back to Tchitchikov (who he also calls "our hero"), who is getting ready for another day of visits. Tchitchikov has shaved, bathed and dressed very nicely to go on his visits.

While he and Selifan are out in the coach, Tchitchikov remembers that he promised to visit Manilov's estate. Manilov had told him that the house was only ten miles out of town. As they begin to travel, Tchitchikov realizes that Manilov's house is actually very far from town.

When the two men finally arrive, they are warmly embraced by Manilov, who is a kind, overly friendly, sweet man. Manilov insists on walking into his house after his guest. Tchitchikov notices that while Manilov's house is nice, no room is completely finished. For example, in Manilov's study, he has a beautiful desk and tapestries, but the armchairs have not been finished. The entire house is like this, as if Manilov has never really settled.

Tchitchikov also meets Manilov's wife and children while he visits his house. The two become such fast friends that they begin speaking very comfortably together. Tchitchikov is happy that Manilov has decided to befriend him so quickly. He finally decides that Manilov may be the perfect person to whom to reveal his plan. After supper, the two men retire to the study. Tchitchikov first asks Manilov how many souls of his have died since the last census. Manilov replies that he thinks a great many have died. Tchitchikov presses Manilov to guess how many. Manilov calls for his steward and asks him for a list of all the dead souls.

When the steward leaves, Manilov questions Tchitchikov. Tchitchikov informs him that he would like to buy all of Manilov's dead souls. Manilov cannot understand. How can



Tchitchikov buy them if they are dead? For a long time Manilov stares at Tchitchikov in confusion. He does not understand and feels embarrassed. Because Tchitchikov is so well educated and smart, Manilov feels slow and dumb. He decides to sell Tchitchikov the dead souls out of fear of seeming stupid and losing his new close friend. Tchitchikov is excited with the outcome of his visit. He promises Manilov he will buy the souls and then says he must be on his way. Tchitchikov wants to go visit another noble, Sobakevitch, he met in town.

Part One: Chapter 2 (pages 18-38) Analysis

In Chapter 2, the first theme is introduced. Throughout the novel, Gogol makes fun of Russian nobleman. Here he shows how ridiculous the men will act to impress each other. The character of Manilov is a caricature of Russian noblemen. He is overly kind, caring and sensitive. So much so that the reader cannot believe he is a real man. Manilov is so worried that he might offend a friend, he agrees to a bargain about something that he barely understands.

Here, the reader also sees the narrator's complete lack of caring toward members of lower classes. Although Selifan and Petrushka are more present in the novel than any of the other landowners, because they are not noble, they are not worth spending time discussing. This shows how Gogol feels the serf system needs to be rethought. Selifan and Petrushka, while of a lower class, are still people with feelings, hopes and aspirations that can never be realized because of their station.



Part One: Chapter 3 (pages 39-60)

Part One: Chapter 3 (pages 39-60) Summary

Selifan picks his master up in his chaise and begins to drive him to Sobakevitch's. Tchitchikov realizes that the weather is getting worse. He also sees that Selifan's driving is not very good. He seems to be weaving and taking wrong turns. Tchitchikov becomes very angry with Selifan and curses him. Because of the weather and encroaching darkness, they cannot seem to find Sobakevitch's house. As the storm continues, the two travelers find a house in the distance. They make their way to the entrance and knock on the door.

An old woman answers the door of a large estate. Selifan begs the woman to let them sleep there for the night. The old woman looks very frightened. She is relieved when Tchitchikov takes control of the situation. She recognizes that he is a nobleman and decides to go and get her mistress. The mistress of the house then comes to the door and insists that Tchitchikov spend the night. He apologizes for the inconvenience. She insists that he is no bother to her. Tchitchikov is happy to have a place to rest.

The next day when Tchitchikov awakes, he takes in his surroundings. He notices that the house is not as grand as he thought it to be the night before. While the furnishings seem nice, they are old and not cared for. He washes himself and goes to find the mistress of the house. Because it now seems that the mistress of the house may not be of a very high class, Tchitchikov feels as though he can talk very comfortably and informally with her because she does not have a high title. The mistress introduces herself as Natsasya Petrovna Korobotcha. The two begin to converse about the town. Tchitchikov feels so comfortable that he decides to ask Madame Korobotcha if she will sell him her dead souls.

Instead of embracing the idea, Madame Korobotcha thinks Tchitchikov is trying to swindle her. When he offers to buy her dead souls, she tried to get him to buy other materials. He insists that he only wants her dead souls. At first Tchitchikov tries to appeal to her sensibilities. The tax accessor has been taxing Madame Korobotcha on peasants who are already dead. Tchitchikov claims that if she sells them to her, she will no longer be swindled by the tax collector. Madame Korobotcha is still hesitant. She is positive that Tchitchikov is cheating her. Finally after much arguing, she agrees to sell him the souls, if he promises to also buy her hemp. Although he is very vexed by the woman, he is glad that he has gained her souls.

Tchitchikov decides it is time to go and find Sobakevitch's home.

Part One: Chapter 3 (pages 39-60) Analysis

When Tchitchikov addresses Madame Korobotcha, it is interesting to note that he does not attempt any decorum. He addresses her very casually and does not treat her with



the same respect he would have treated a man he was visiting. He also almost pressures her into selling him the souls with his constant bickering with her. Tchitchikov is so hung up on himself that he does not realize that he might have to explain his reasons for wanting the souls to anyone, let alone Madame Korobotcha. While this subtle character trait is not yet realized by the reader, Tchitchikov 's real character will soon be revealed.



Part One: Chapter 4 (pages 61- 88)

Part One: Chapter 4 (pages 61- 88) Summary

On the way to Sobakevitch's estate, Tchitchikov decides to stop at a tavern for food. While he is there, he decides to make the acquaintance of the tavern owner so he can find out more about the landowner he is going to visit. While he is eating, Tchitchikov hears a familiar voice. It is Nozdroyov, the young man he met at a house party in town. Nozdroyov has obviously been out with his brother-in-law drinking because he is extremely loud and boisterous. He also reveals to Tchitchikov that he has just gambled away a lot of money.

Nozdroyov insists that Tchitchikov come to his house. Tchitchikov tells Nozdroyov that he cannot because he is on his way to see Sobakevitch about some personal business and does not wish to be delayed. Nozdroyov quickly dismisses Tchitchikov's plan. He says that Tchitchikov will not enjoy himself at Sobakevitch's. Nozdroyov then calls his manservant to bring one of his dogs into the tavern. Nozdroyov is smitten with the dog and plays with it on the tavern floor. Tchitchikov agrees that the dog is a good one. As Tchitchikov watches Nozdroyov play with the dog, he realizes that Nozdroyov does many things without thinking. He always seems to be up for a new plan or scheme. He might even be willing to give Tchitchikov the souls for very little! Thus, Tchitchikov finally agrees to go to Nozdroyov's home. Nozdroyov is so excited that he kisses Tchitchikov on the cheek.

The three men leave and drive their chaises side by side so that they can still talk. The narrator then begins to comment on the character of Nozdroyov. Nozdroyov is very lively and likable. He wins people over with his open personal, vibrant nature, and rakish charms. As a playboy, he knows how to talk anything out of anyone. He is the type of man who would like to quickly become your friend but in the next instance fight with you over the most trivial matter. Tchitchikov will soon learn this.

Once they arrive at Nozdroyov's house, he insists that Tchitchikov see more of his dogs. Nozdroyov then suggests that Tchitchikov buy a dog, but Tchitchikov refuses. Nozdroyov brags about how while he was gambling, he had one of his stewards complete a business deal for him. Because of it, he has gained a considerable amount of land.

The three men then begin to drink. Nozdroyov's brother-in-law becomes quickly drunk. He tells the other two men that he must get home to his wife. Tchitchikov is glad to see him go. He has been longing to speak with Nozdroyov privately about his business. Tchitchikov first asks Nozdroyov if he will promise to do something before he asks what it is. Nozdroyov becomes instantly intrigued. He cannot wait to know what the favor is. Tchitchikov then tells him of his business. Nozdroyov is instantly curious and wants answers. He demands to know why Tchitchikov wants the dead souls. Tchitchikov



reluctantly tells him he needs the souls to impress his beloved's father. By gaining more peasants, he will look wealthier on paper; Nozdroyov refuses to believe this.

Nozdroyov then tells Tchitchikov that he can only have the souls if he buys a stallion. Tchitchikov tells him he has no need for one. He then says that he will sell Tchitchikov the souls if he buys one of his fine dogs also. Tchitchikov again refuses to buy the dog. Nozdroyov then offers to sell his chaise and barrel-organ along with the souls. Tchitchikov cannot understand why Nozdroyov will not sell him the souls. It is not as though he will do anything with them or they are profitable to him, but still Nozdroyov refuses to sell only the souls.

He then tells Tchitchikov that he will play a card game for the souls. Tchitchikov refuses because he saw the way Nozdroyov acted in another card game. The two men finally call it a night. As Tchitchikov lies in bed, he instantly regrets telling Nozdroyov about his plan. Nozdroyov is not the kind of man that will keep secrets. Tchitchikov should have been more careful to whom he reveals his business.

The next day, Nozdroyov tells Tchitchikov he has felt horrible about not selling him the peasants the night before. At last, Tchitchikov feels he might get what he wants, but Nozdroyov again asks him to play a game for the peasants. This time, Nozdroyov suggests they play a game of draughts. He promises Tchitchikov that he is not good at the game. As the two begin to play, Tchitchikov notices that his opponent repeatedly tries to cheat him. In frustration, Tchitchikov tells Nozdroyov he will not continue the game. Tchitchikov tells Nozdroyov that he must go, but Nozdroyov will not have it. He is furious that Tchitchikov will not partake in the game. Suddenly, he becomes enraged and calls his two man servants into the room. He tells them to take hold of Tchitchikov and beat him. Tchitchikov and the servants are completely startled, but they begin to close in on Tchitchikov.

Suddenly, there is a noise in the entry hall. A man comes charging into the room looking for Mr. Nozdroyov. The man states that he is the police-captain. He says that Nozdroyov is being charged with the beating a man in a drunken rage.

Part One: Chapter 4 (pages 61- 88) Analysis

This section of the novel is somewhat hilarious and ridiculous. This is because Nozdroyov, who is supposed to be a gentleman is resorting to physical violence. He is the "bully" of the story. This is again another caricature of what the Russian nobleman can be. Nozdroyov is an interesting character to examine because while he seems to be everything a gentleman should be, he has a dark side, which is not acceptable in polite society. His affinity for gambling, women and drinking are normal for a gentleman, but his desire to fight Tchitchikov is completely unexpected.

With the character of Nozdroyov, the reader is also introduced to the theme of immorality. Nozdroyov is clearly immoral in his actions and his words. He is especially immoral considering his society's rules. Thus, the reader might wonder why Tchitchikov



has decided to expose his business to Nozdroyov. Maybe it is because he feels a connection to Nozdroyov. The reader has been led to think that Tchitchikov is the hero, but maybe he is hiding something from the reader? What is his true reason for his desire to have the souls? He does not answer Nozdroyov in a straight manner.



Part One: Chapter 5 (pages 89-110)

Part One: Chapter 5 (pages 89-110) Summary

While Nozdroyov is being arrested by the police-captain, Tchitchikov frantically hurries to his chaise, where Selifan is waiting. The two men make their way without any delay. After the strange encounter with Nozdroyov, Tchitchikov is nervous, scared and very shaken. Selifan also comments on how horrible Nozdroyov was.

Finally, Tchitchikov is on his way to see Sobakevitch. Selifan drives fast so to make up for lost time. Fast approaching the travelers is another carriage. All of a sudden, the two carriages' horses and reins become entwined. While Tchitchikov is at first annoyed with the predicament, he soon notices that a very beautiful sixteen-year-old girl is in the other chaise. As the struggle to untangle the chaises continues, Tchitchikov continues to stare at the beautiful young girl. Finally, after some time and the help of peasants, both chaises are set free.

As the young girl and her companion ride off, Tchitchikov continues to think about her. He wonders what he would have done, had he been twenty years younger. He might have thought about going after the young maiden. But Tchitchikov begins to reason that while she may be quite beautiful, she is still only a young girl. Soon her naive head will be filled with the ramblings of her mother, aunts and other silly women. He further justifies that she will not amount to anything but a polished, uneducated, possibly successful wife.

Selifan and Tchitchikov continue on to Sobakevitch's home. Tchitchikov notices that as they get closer and closer to Sobakevitch's home, the peasants houses look more sturdy and well built. The land and gardens leading up to the estate are kept trim but not audacious. Sobakevitch's estate is solid and strongly built. There is nothing fanciful or beautiful about the house, and it actually reminds the narrator of its owner.

Within moments, Sobakevitch is outside ready to greet his guest. The host brings Tchitchikov into his home to meet his wife and children. While Sobakevitch is very kind to his wife and children, he talks very badly about everyone else. When Tchitchikov brings up how agreeable the police-captain, president and governor are, Sobakevitch will not allow anything positive to be said about them. Tchitchikov quickly learns that to satisfy his new friend, he cannot speak kindly about anyone around else. The two men discuss many things. Sobakevitch talks about a landowner Plyushkin. Plyushkin is apparently a very cruel landowner. He starves his peasants to death and has lost a large number in the past years. Tchitchikov is extremely delighted and intrigued to learn about this. He decides he wants to visit Plyushkin but does not tell Sobakevitch.

After dinner, the two men are left alone to relax in their easy chairs. They begin to talk, but Tchitchikov quickly moves the conversation to his business proposal. Surprisingly, Sobakevitch immediately agrees to sell Tchitchikov the souls. Tchitchikov is shocked! He



can hardly believe that the sturdy and gruff Sobakevitch so readily agreed to sell the souls. Tchitchikov soon learns that Sobakevitch fully intends on bargaining for the souls.

At first, Sobakevitch insists that Tchitchikov buys the souls for two hundred roubles each. Tchitchikov is astonished. Tchitchikov claims that the souls are worth nothing to him, so how can he want two hundred roubles for each? Tchitchikov says that he will pay Sobakevitch two roubles for each soul. Sobakevitch will not accept the price. Tchitchikov assures him that if he could pay him more he would. Sobakevitch continues to press Tchitchikov. He thinks the souls are still very valuable because the men that passed away were very productive while alive. Tchitchikov thinks this makes no sense. Sobakevitch asks for one hundred roubles, fifty and then twenty-five. Tchitchikov continues to refuse, insisting that he will not and cannot pay that much for the dead souls. Finally, after much quarreling the men decide on two and a half roubles. Tchitchikov is still mad that he had to fight with Sobakevitch but is happy to have gained more souls.

Tchitchikov tells his guest that he must leave. He also asks for directions to Plyushkin's estate. Sobakevitch warns him against going there. Tchitchikov listens and reassures his host he will not go there.

Part One: Chapter 5 (pages 89-110) Analysis

By the time Tchitchikov goes to see Sobakevitch, we can see how Gogol has structured the novel. It seems as though each section of the novel is developed into little vignettes that can stand alone. Each is a tale of how Tchitchikov has gone about securing souls for himself. It is also surprising that Sobakevitch so willingly decides to sell the souls to Tchitchikov. As an intelligent, sturdy man who always has his wits about him, it does not make sense for him to question Tchitchikov's plan as little as he does. Does he simply trust Tchitchikov because he is as taken with him as everyone else is?



Part One: Chapter 6 (pages 111- 133)

Part One: Chapter 6 (pages 111- 133) Summary

After saying goodbye to his host, Tchitchikov decides to visit Plyushkin. As Selifan drives the coach toward Plyushkin's house, he notices that the landscape starts to deteriorate. The land and crops are not kept well. Much of the crop is brown and dead. What should be peasant homes are simply shacks. Many houses have caved-in roofs, shattered windows, and weak foundations. The chaise come upon a women. Tchitchikov gets out of the chaise and asks the woman where Plyuskin's house is. Tchitchikov discovers that the woman is actually Plyushkin's housekeeper. She grumpily shows Tchitchikov to where the house is and invites him in. Tchitchikov is appalled at his surroundings. While he expected Plyushkin to treat his peasants badly, he did not think that the man would treat his own house that way! The house has papers strewn everywhere, thick dust on counters and chandeliers, broken chairs and flies hovering over piles of materials.

Tchitchikov waits in the parlor. Finally, a man enters wearing a tattered coat, torn gloves and holey shoes. At first, Tchitchikov thinks the man is the master's steward and then his horseman. When he asks the man where the master is, the man exclaims that he is the the master. Tchitchikov is shocked. With this revelation, the narrator explains who Plyushkin is. At one time, he was a very happy man. He had a loving wife who gave him three children. The wife managed his estate and kept him happy in many ways. She died while she was still young. Plyushkin tried to raise his daughters and son well, but failed miserably. His eldest daughter ran off with a soldier and his son became a soldier. Soon after, his youngest daughter died. Heartbroken and angry at the world, Plyushkin stops caring about his estate, peasants and himself.

Tchitchikov feels throughly sorry for the man and decides that he can help him by taking over his dead souls. He proposes the idea to Plyushkin, who is very excited. At first, he thinks that Tchitchikov is trying to cheat him but is then persuaded by Tchitchikov's kind words and sympathy towards his hard life. Plyushkin has one hundred and twenty souls to give to Tchitchikov. Tchitchikov then offers to pay him thirty kopeks a soul. Plyushkin agrees and asks Tchitchikov how he will know the sale is final. Tchitchikov tells him that they must draw up purchase papers, and he will also give him money down for the serfs. Plyushkin agrees. Tchitchikov then leaves to return to his hotel. He has not been home in some time and apologizes to Plyushkin for his departure.

Part One: Chapter 6 (pages 111- 133) Analysis

Plyushkin's character is a little more believable than other characters invented by Gogol. Here, Gogol strips a man bare. Plyushkin has sunken into the deepest depression because of death. He has let his land and estate completely deteriorate. Because he can not take care of himself, he cannot take care of his peasants. Plyushkin may not be



a caricature of Russian men—he shows the honesty of losing family, land and wealth. The reader also learns that Tchitchikov is not afraid to take advantage of a desperate man. This again makes the reader think about the true nature of the hero of the novel.



Part One: Chapter 7 (page 134- 155)

Part One: Chapter 7 (page 134- 155) Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, Tchitchikov is very pleased with himself. After surveying the lists of peasants he purchased, he now has four-hundred souls. As Tchitchikov surveys the list, he becomes almost sentimental about his dead souls. He feels as though he knows a little about each one and begins to speculate stories about each of their lives. Oddly, he feels a connection to them, almost as if he had had a chance to get to know them. After a long while, Tchitchikov realizes how long he has been obsessing over the souls. The narrator interjects and says that no man of significant wealth should waste that much time on souls. He remembers that he must go to the government building to officially finish the purchase of the souls.

As Tchitchikov is leaving the hotel, he sees Manilov in the street. Manilov is very excited to see his new friend. Tchitchikov tells him that he must be off to see to the end of the purchase. Manilov seems a little nervous about the final sale, but asks if he may accompany Tchitchikov because he loves his new friend so dearly.

As they arrive, Tchitchikov asks one of the clerks who he should talk to about finalizing the sale of serfs. Because Tchitchikov is a stranger, all the clerks instantly become curious about his business. Tchitchikov refuses to talk about it anymore and insists on being directed to a clerk that can help him. Finally the clerk tells him to go and see Ivan Antonovitch. When he reaches Antonovitch's desk, he inquires about the sale. Antonovitch is very busy and says there is no way the sale can be completed today or anytime soon. Tchitchikov is very troubled by this answer. He wants to finish this business as soon as possible. He decides to mention that he is friends with the president, but Antonovitch still does not care. Tchitchikov and Manilov then go to see the president. When they arrive at his office, Sobakevitch is also visiting the president.

The president is extremely excited to see Tchitchikov. He immediately stands up and greets Tchitchikov with kisses and kind words. It also seems as though Sobakevitch has already told the president about Tchitchikov's "good fortune" of buying the souls. Tchitchikov is relieved he can trust Sobakevitch. The president orders Ivan Antonovitch to complete the sale immediately. The president is extremely impressed that Tchitchikov has his purchase of serfs worth a hundred thousand roubles.

The president then invites Tchitchikov and Manilov to dinner at the police captain's house. All the men seem to be taken with Tchitchikov. They speak highly of him and swear they will see him married soon. Tchitchikov is flattered by his new friends. He feels as though his life will soon be turning around.



Part One: Chapter 7 (page 134- 155) Analysis

Again, it is interesting to see how Tchitchikov's smooth words, presence and intellect have gained him the most influential friends. People who have barely met him, have begun to bend over backwards to help a man they know absolutely nothing about. Tchitchikov's friends become even more enamored of him as he buys the souls. It certainly must mean he has a lot of money.



Part One: Chapter 8 (page 156- 180)

Part One: Chapter 8 (page 156- 180) Summary

It does not take long for word to reach the rest of the town about Tchitchikov 's purchase. Soon, everyone is talking about it. Tchitchikov has gained much respect in many circles. While he was well liked before, many people now suspect he is a millionaire. This works in Tchitchikov's favor because he seems to be moving up in society.

The narrator interrupts the story to speak about the women of N. He says they are very beautiful, well dressed and sophisticated. They are also materialistic, petty, gossipy and opinionated. The narrator makes a point to have the reader understand that the woman of the town often determine the social worthiness of someone. The woman are so petty that if one woman does not return another's invitation, they would become enemies for life. Luckily for Tchitchikov, the women of N are quite taken with him. They are all eager to know the latest gossip concerning the new gentlemen in town.

The next day, the police captain throws a ball. When Tchitchikov arrives, the entire ball room is abuzz. He is greeted very warmly by all his very influential friends. The women closely watch Tchitchikov's every movement. To Tchitchikov's surprise the fair maiden, whose carriage's horses had become entangled with Tchitchikov's enters the ball. He soon learns that the beautiful young girl is the governor's daughter. Tchitchikov cannot take his eyes off the fair maiden. All the women in the room are soon aware of the attraction. Tchitchikov makes his way over to the girl and tries to speak with her. The women of N are not happy about this. They cannot understand why he might want such a green girl.

While Tchitchikov is talking to the young woman, Nozdroyov enters the ballroom. Tchitchikov is instantly alert. He decides to leave the young lady for fear Nozdroyov will say something to her. Before Tchitchikov can leave the room, Nozdroyov spots Tchitchikov. Nozdroyov calls out to Tchitchikov calling him a scoundrel. He starts saying that he cannot believe anyone would sell dead souls to him. Nozdroyov yells about the dead souls as he crosses the ballroom. Tchitchikov becomes extremely embarrassed. He quickly tries to get away from his pursuer.

Many of the guests at the ball hear the talk of the dead souls, but they do not believe Nozdroyov because he often lies to everyone. Tchitchikov is nervous and uncomfortable. He tries to stay at the party a little longer but cannot bring himself to remain. Little does Tchitchikov know that the worst of his problems are only beginning.

Part One: Chapter 8 (page 156- 180) Analysis

Though Gogol's description of Russian women is very harsh and biting, it must be remembered that the author's goal was to satirize Russian life. This is a recurring theme



in the book. The women of the town make it their business to know and judge everyone else's business. The women are also examples of how Russian life has changed. During the rule of Napoleon, Russia was forced to become one large empire state. While adapting to their new ruler, Russian society adapted to new social codes. This is not a new happening for Russia, a country that since the days of the Enlightenment, has tried to appear more cultured and civilized than its western counterparts.

Nozdroyov's exposure of Tchitchikov is expected. Nozdroyov is such a bully that social decorum and standards do not stop him from trying to ruin Tchitchikov. Tchitchikov's embarrassment is also expected. How did he not think the Nozdroyov would not come back to attack him?—especially after all the talk of the souls that Tchitchikov has just purchased. This interlude foreshadows what will happen in the following chapters. Once Nozdroyov has put the idea of dead souls into everyone's mind, it will not be easy to erase.



Part One: Chapter 9 (pages 181- 199)

Part One: Chapter 9 (pages 181- 199) Summary

Later the night of the ball, an anxious Madame Korobotcha arrives in the town of N. The previous day, she had woken up in a fit of sweats. She could not get over Tchitchikov's visit and became insistent on knowing for what price dead souls were now selling. She is certain that he swindled her. Soon, word of Madame Korobotcha's visit gets all over town and the rumors start with two ladies of N.

The morning after the ball, Sofia Ivanovna goes to visit her dear friend Anna Grigoryevna. The two characters have never been introduced by the narrator until now. Anna is surprised to see Sofia, but also very happy that she has stopped by. At first Sofia cannot bring herself to tell Anna about what she has just heard. She tells Anna that there is a great scandal concerning everyone's favorite man in town, Tchitchikov. Sofia begins speaking exclamations in French to express her discomfort, but the narrator says that he will not interpret the language of this beautiful Russian poem and write in French.

Finally, Sofia has calmed down and she can relay her gossip to Anna. This morning the wife of Father Frill called on Sofia. Mrs Frill did not seem herself at all—she appeared deeply disturbed. Mrs. Frill explains that she had a visit from Madame Korobotcha, who had insisted on knowing what the price for souls was in town. Mrs. Frill was very perplexed by this question. Sofia explains to Anna that Tchitchikov paid Madame Korobotcha a visit late in the night. He appeared at her door demanding that he be let in. He also tells her that he must buy her dead souls from her. Madame Korobotch did not know what to say. She did not understand why Tchitchikov might want the dead souls. When she asks him why, he becomes violent. Scared for her own life, she tells Tchitchikov that she will give him the dead souls

Anna is at a lost for words. Both women sit for a while in silence. They are both trying to think of why Tchitchikov would want dead souls! Finally Sofia settles on an answer. It is obviously because Tchitchikov wants to elope with the governor's daughter! Both women firmly agree that this must be why. They quickly begin putting down the governor's daughter. How could he be attracted to her? They then figure that because Nozdroyov knew about the dead souls, he must be helping with the elopement.

As the women are talking, Anna's husband, the public prosecutor enters the room. At first the ladies do not tell him of what they are speaking but soon cannot contain their news. They tell him, and then begin telling everyone else what has happened. Soon the news of Tchitchikov's dead souls, elopement and mean character are all over the town of N. People who have not been seen in public for years are coming out from all different places to hear the news. As the story passes from person to person, it is changed many times and becomes more and more elaborate. The news reaches the governor's wife, who becomes very upset. She interrogates her daughter, who knows



nothing about Tchitchikov or getting married. Tchitchikov is banned from the governor's house.

The influential men in town, who had become fast friends with Tchitchikov are instantly frightened that he might cause their own reputations to be damaged. They try to ignore the rumors their wives were spreading but cannot. The men become afraid that Tchitchikov had been sent by the new governor general to be a spy. The president of the court, who approved Tchitchikov's purchase of the souls becomes quite concerned. In one way or the other, all Tchitchikov 's new friends become convinced that Tchitchikov will hurt their reputation. They decide to ask Madam Korobotcha and Plyushkin. Neither prove to be much help. The men therefore decide to convene at the house of the policeman.

Part One: Chapter 9 (pages 181- 199) Analysis

In this chapter, Gogol brings his mockery of Russian society to the height of ridiculousness. As the women begin to gossip of the news they just heard, they spin a tale of lies. Everyone becomes caught up in the business of the stranger. Men, peasants, hermits and invalids rush onto the streets to hear about Tchitchikov's news. The entire town is somewhat fascinated and appalled by the strangeness of the situation. These are people are not open to change, but instead trapped in their views. Gogol is calling for a change in Russian society. He can see the influences from other cultures on his people and does not appreciate it. This can also be seen when he interrupts Sofia Ivanovna and Anna Grigoryevna from speaking in French to one another. He does not want a foreign tongue to interrupt the flow of the beautiful Russian language.

It is also important to note the power that gossip has over people. All the influential men in town who readily opened their homes and arms to Tchitchikov now thoroughly regret doing so. Any connection with him is now seen as the death of one's reputation and career.



Part One: Chapter 10 (pages 200 - 218)

Part One: Chapter 10 (pages 200 - 218) Summary

Once they arrive at the police-master's house, the men begin to think about who Tchitchikov might really be. The postmaster says that Tchitchikov might be Captain Kopeykin. He then launches into a long story about the Captain. The Captain served in several wars for Russia. Because of it, he loses an arm and leg in combat. He goes to the army officials and requests to have money pensioned because he can no longer work. The army official tells him he must come back in a few days. When he returns, they say that they cannot yet give him money but maybe they will be able to soon. The Captain is very angry with this answer and disappears. The postmaster believes that he may be Tchitchikov. The other men have doubts because Tchitchikov is not missing any limbs. The postmaster insists that this may be because he has had fake limbs made. The others quickly move past the postmaster's suggestion. Someone even suggests that Tchitchikov is Napoleon.

The men decide to go and talk to Nozdroyov. Although he often makes up things, he did know about the transaction of dead souls. When Nozdroyov arrives and sees that he has the opportunity to talk about Tchitchikov, he is very excited. When the men ask him if Tchitchikov is a spy, he says that he is. He also tells them that he has helped Tchitchikov plan the entire elopement. Nozdroyov even picked out the church where they are to be wed. The men ask him about Tchitchikov being Napoleon but regret it immediately. He launches into a story that could not possibly be true.

For some reason, all the gossip and rumors seriously affects the prosecutor, who drops dead. The narrator points out that he could have died of many causes - a stroke, heart attack or sudden illness. The fact that he dies in the midst of the Tchitchikov drama is what makes people assume that Tchitchikov is the cause of the death.

Nozdroyov leaves and decides to immediately visit Tchitchikov. It turns out that Tchitchikov has been sick for the last couple of days. He has no idea of the rumors that have been circulating about him. Tchitchikov is not excited to see Nozdroyov. Before he has a chance to ready himself, Nozdroyov enters the room. He tells Tchitchikov that everyone knows about the elopement, dead souls and that Tchitchikov is a spy. Tchitchikov is very confused. He begs Nozdroyov to leave him. Once he does, Tchitchikov vows to get a good night's sleep and go and settle things tomorrow.

Part One: Chapter 10 (pages 200 - 218) Analysis

Again the effect of idle gossip is seen in this chapter. Because of it, the public prosecutor drops dead. While this is also another means of over exaggeration, it also symbolizes that gossip can effectively kill someone's reputation in higher circles. As evidence compounds against Tchitchikov, it seems clear that he is about to experience a



social death of sorts. His end in society in the town of N, is only accelerated by Nozdroyov's lies and goals to bring Tchitchikov down. Although the men in town know that Nozdroyov is nothing but a scoundrel and liar, they still let his stories influence them.



Part One: Chapter 11 (pages 219- 251)

Part One: Chapter 11 (pages 219- 251) Summary

Sadly for Tchitchikov, the day does not go as he planned at all. He wakes up very late and finds that the chaise has not been readied for him. He is furious with his own laziness, as well as Selifan's inability to get the coach ready. Selifan maintains that it is because one of the wheels is broken. The two men take it to be repaired. The laborer tells Tchitchikov that the carriage cannot be mended quickly. The job will certainly take at least two hours. To get it fixed faster, Tchitchikov will need to pay more money. Tchitchikov is very angry, but agrees to pay the extra money. He and Selifan return to the hotel where Petrushka has been packing Tchitchikov's belongings. The men finish packing, but in two hours time, the chaise is still not finished, Tchitchikov is enraged but there is little he can do.

Finally, the chaise is ready, and Tchitchikov is able to go and call on his new friends. As he arrives at the postmaster, president of the court, prosecutor and other friends' houses, Tchitchikov is treated very strangely. No one knows what to say to him. They are afraid for their own reputations as well as puzzled by this man. He tries going to the governor's house but is turned away by a servant who tells Tchitchikov that he is never to visit the house again. Tchitchikov cannot believe that Nozdroyov is actually right. All his friends have turned against him. As Tchitchikov travels from one house to another, he sees the funeral procession for the prosecutor. Tchitchikov is very nervous that someone will recognize his chaise. He certainly does not want to be blamed for the prosecutor's death because there is already a cloud of suspicion around his other actions.

Tchitchikov is no idiot. He can tell that his time in N. has come to an end. He tells Selifan to drive as fast as he can. He does not give specific directions. Tchitchikov just wishes to get as far away from N. as humanly possible. As the chaise hastily clamors along, the narrator now feels it is time to tell about Tchitchikov's past. Up until now, no one knows from where the hero of the story came.

Tchitchikov was born to a noble family that had very little wealth. They owned a small bit of land as well as a few serfs. Tchitchikov's family's financial situation was so poor that his father began to work. Every day he took Tchitchikov along with him for a ride through town to sell whatever goods he could. One day, his father drove himself and Tchitchikov into town, and left Tchitchikov with an elderly relation. Tchitchikov's father told him to always pay attention to his lessons, be obedient of his teachers and save all his money so that he could one day be wealthy. This was the last time that Tchitchikov saw his father, but he took his father's last words to heart.

In school, Tchitchikov was an excellent student. While some classmates fell behind, Tchitchikov always knew the answer. He was usually the teacher's favorite student. When his father died, he inherited a decrepit estate, which he immediately sold. After



his school days were over, Tchitchikov took up a post at the Palace of Justice. The job was not fitting for Tchitchikov at all because he was much smarter than the tasks that were given him. He was also only paid 35 roubles a year, Tchitchikov was determined to become a wealthy man and leave somewhat of a legacy for himself. Hoping to progress in his new post, he poured all his hard work into his position. His superior, however, was a cold, old man who did not recognize Tchitchikov's potential and hard work. Tchitchikov soon realized that to progress, he was going to have to make himself indispensable to the old clerk. After some time of flattering the old man, the position of head clerk opened and Tchitchikov greedily accepted the position, leaving the old clerk to fend for himself.

In his new position, Tchitchikov excels very quickly. He is good in his position but also gained wealth through other immoral means. Besides pocketing money on the side like all other court clerks, Tchitchikov got himself onto a committee for building a government building. He and other members used some of the money to make their own fine residencies and purchases for their homes. When a new chief is instated, he calls for an end to the corruption. He orders accounts be seized and numbers verified. Many of the court's officials get in trouble, but Tchitchikov is singled out because the chief dislikes him. All his money is taken and his residencies are also seized. For a while, Tchitchikov cannot get another job anywhere. He became very depressed and unkempt.

Finally one day, he decides to turn his life around. He applies for a job at the Customs Office. This is where he has always wanted to work. Again, Tchitchikov is very good at his new job. He is also very ethical this time. Whenever he catches anyone with illegal contraband, he does not keep it. Instead, he turns it in as is required. Tchitchikov becomes well known for how strict he is. Instead of keeping up this morality, Tchitchikov contrives a plot with another customs officer to keep some contraband. As it turns out, the people carrying the illegal goods have set up Tchitchikov! Both men are arrested and their reputations are ruined. The other customs officer cannot deal with the guilt and kills himself, while Tchitchikov has enough friends in influential places that the whole ordeal is kept quiet. When he gets out of prison, he is only given back his two serfs, Selifan and Petrushka and ten-thousand roubles. Again, he leaves another town in shame.

Sometime later, Tchitchikov is able to get another job. This time it is with the Trustee Committee managing the mortgaging of peasants. As he gains experience in this profession, he realizes that often people are continuously taxed on dead souls. The government does not know they are dead until the next census. Tchitchikov then devises another plan to get rich quickly. If he buys souls that are already dead, he can buy them very cheaply. With all the souls he collects, he will then be allowed to buy land (In Russia you had to have serfs to buy land). Tchitchikov congratulates himself on his brilliant plan. This is what brings Tchitchikov to the town of N. and the purchase of the first dead souls.

The narrator then compares Tchitchikov's impatience to collect wealth as Russia's impatience to grow wealthy and expand. The narrator says Russia is much like a troika (a horse-drawn carriage) driving at high, unyielding speeds. He asks what is the



mysterious force behind this troika? As other nations see Russia coming, they make way for her.

Part One: Chapter 11 (pages 219- 251) Analysis

Finally in this chapter, the narrator allows the reader some insight into the background and true nature of Tchitchikov. Before this time, he has not let anyone know the character's true feelings. Tchitchikov is not the kind, humble and generous man the Narrator would like him to be. The narrator knows this and asks the reader to forgive him for not sharing information on Tchitchikov's true character before.

Here the theme of immorality is touched on. The narrator never says that what Tchitchikov has done was a horrible or wrong thing, but the reader clearly sees that what Tchitchikov has done in his past is wrong. On several occasions, he has a chance to be successful in a fair, moral way, but he continues to resort back to his "get rich quick" schemes. The narrator asks the reader to sympathize with Tchitchikov because of his dream to gain land and be successful like his father never was. But it becomes very difficult to feel sorry for Tchitchikov because he continually breaks the law and cheats others to get ahead.



Part Two: Chapter 1 (pages 255- 285)

Part Two: Chapter 1 (pages 255- 285) Summary

The next part of the novel begins with the introduction of Andrey Ivanovitch Tyentyetnikov, a thirty-three-year old unmarried landowner. He is a collegiate secretary and spends most of his time with his head in his books. He spends most of his day in his house, only in his dressing gown and rarely has any visitors. For his work, he tries to solve the political, philosophical, and civic problems of Russia. He grew up as many landowners did, going to school and excelling in his studies. As a young man, Andrey was had a very gentle disposition, but as he got older, his attitudes changed. He quit his first job in Petersburg because he grew angry with and tired of his supervisor, Fyodor Fyodorovitch Lynenitsyn. He spoke very rudely to him and was asked to step down from his position. When Andrey returned home, he was very happy to be home.

Andrey realizes that the estate left to him is extremely nice, fertile and workable land. He has the best intentions of making the estate greater than it already is. The only problem is that Andrey knows nothing about running an estate, but he attempts to do so anyway. The peasants are at first happy that their master has returned, but soon grow tired of his inexperience and lack of know-how. Andrey felt like a failure and decided to stop leaving his house everyday.

It is not until he sees a beautiful girl named Ulinka that he decides to leave the house once more. Ulinka is the daughter of a general that lives nearby. Andrey decides to become friendly with the general so that he may one day wed Ulinka. All is going well until Countess Boldyrev and Princess Yuzyakin come to visit. Andrey is at the general's house when the two ladies stop by. Andrey feels neglected by the general and refuses to be seen as less worthy than a Countess and Princess. He decides to leave at once and return to the confines of his house. Soon the estate becomes dirty and full of grit. Andrey sits around all day long doing nothing.

This brings the story back to the present. One day while he is lying in bed, Andrey sees a carriage pull up. A very distinguished gentleman steps out of the carriage. With him, are two servants. Andrey becomes very nervous because he thinks the man is a police officer. Andrey goes outside to meet the man, who gives him a very graceful bow. The man tells Andrey that he is on official business. He is surveying the land for a variety of soils. While on his journey, he could not help noticing how beautiful the land is. He also did not mean to intrude but one of his chaise's wheels is broken, and he and his servants need somewhere to stay. At once, Andrey is taken with the man and says that he can stay with him how ever long he chooses.

Soon it is revealed that the visitor is indeed Tchitchikov. It has been sometime since he left N. His clothes are a little less elegant; his chaise is worn, and it is evident that he is running low on money, but he is as graceful and agreeable as ever. He quickly begins to set up house in the estate. There is a drastic change in the estate. No longer does



Andrey do nothing; in order to impress his visitor, he has things cleaned and tries again to manage things. Tchitchikov often takes walks around Andrey's land and is angered that someone could let something like it go to waste. Andrey and Tchitchikov seem to like each other very much, but each thinks the other is somewhat odd in his actions and behaviors.

To Andrey's dismay, Tchitchikov then decides to go and visit the general and his daughter. Tchitchikov cannot understand what the falling out was about, but Andrey cannot bring himself to go and see the general. Tchitchikov departs using Andrey's carriage.

Part Two: Chapter 1 (pages 255- 285) Analysis

This is the first chapter in which the narrator is not present in the book. This could be because Gogol might have meant for the two parts to be separate books, but because there is no narrator, there is more of an unbiased feel to the book. Now, the reader can find out more information concerning Tchitchikov. The narrator's character could be very overbearing at times.

It is also interesting that so much description is given about the character of Andrey. While he is obviously another nobleman that Gogol is making fun of, he is not a main character. He also has no other role in the rest of the book. The description of the character becomes somewhat tedious. Tchitchikov also begins to take advantage of Andrey's hospitality and immediately moves in with the unsuspecting bachelor.



Part Two: Chapter 2 (pages 286 - 295)

Part Two: Chapter 2 (pages 286 - 295) Summary

Tchitchikov arrives at the general's house and is warmly welcomed by the general. Almost immediately, he takes a liking to Tchitchikov. Tchitchikov is also very impressed with the General Betrishtchev's powerful appearance and majestic demeanor. Tchitchikov explains that he is staying with Andrey. He also tells the general the Andrey is very sorry for their disagreement they had some time ago. The general simply laughs and says that he was never angry with Andrey. He calls his daughter Ulinka down to tell her the news.

Tchitchikov can see why Andrey was very much in love with Ulinka. She is quite beautiful and educated. The three sit down for dinner, where Tchitchikov is happy and entertaining to the General. He tells him amusing stories and tales. The general cannot seem to get enough of Tchitchikov. After dinner, once Ulinka has retired and the general is ready for his bath, Tchitchikov asks him if he will help with a problem. The general agrees. Tchitchikov explains that he has an uncle that is very old and very rich. He has over three-hundred souls and a lot of land. The uncle has no other heirs, but will not give the land over to Tchitchikov to tend to unless Tchitchikov can gain three-hundred souls. Tchitchikov goes on to explain that he would like to buy dead souls from the general and present them to his uncle as being alive. The general thinks this is an excellent joke to play on an old man and agrees to give Tchitchikov all his dead souls. He even tells Tchitchikov that he may take the entire cemetery!

It is at this point in the novel where there is a large gap in the manuscript.

Part Two: Chapter 2 (pages 286 - 295) Analysis

Tchitchikov obviously goes to see the General so he can obtain more souls. Here, we see that he has learned his lesson. Tchitchikov does not just ask to buy souls outright. Now he has a story that will not cause people to ask so many questions. He also does not have to conduct his business that privately because it is all a great joke. Again, Tchitchikov has smoothly worked his way into being friends with unassuming people.



Part Two: Chapter 3 (pages 296- 331)

Part Two: Chapter 3 (pages 296- 331) Summary

The next chapter begins with Tchitchikov going to visit General Koshkaryov. He Selifan and Petrushka seem to be lost again. As the men continue walking they see a lake nearby. It looks as though a gentleman may have fallen in and his servants are trying to save him. Tchitchikov speculates that this is General Kosharyov. When the man makes his way out of the water, Tchitchikov introduces himself, saying that General Betrishtchev had sent him. The man does not know who that is. He says that he is Pyotr Petrovich Pyetuh. Tchitchikov is angry that Selifan and Petrushka have once again gotten something wrong. Pyetuh tells him not to worry and invites him to eat with his family.

Also attending dinner is Platon Mihailovitch Platonov, a graceful man with a pleasant smile, who always seems bored with life. Tchitchikov is interested in Platon's boredom. Surely there must be something wrong with his estate or wealth that might cause him some worry. He tells Tchitchikov that this is not the case. He owns over thirty-thousand souls, and his brother is an excellent manager of their estate. Pyetuh tells Tchitchikov not to worry. They will soon bring Platon out of his boredom. At dinner, the three men severely overeat, but Tchitchikov continues to eat so he does not insult his host. The men talk of different ways that Platon could be entertained. Tchitchikov offers that Platon could travel with him for a while. The men decide that this is the most agreeable option.

Before Platon and Tchitchikov set out on their journey, Platon mentions that he would like to say goodbye to his sister and brother-in-law. Tchitchikov decides this would be a good idea. The men set off on their visit, bidding Pyetuh goodbye. When they arrive at Platon's sister's house, they are greeted by her husband, Konstantin Fyodorovitch Skudronzhoglo. Tchitchikov is quite taken with Skudronzhoglo's lands and home. His neighbors' properties cannot compete with the well-cared-for land. Everything on the land is in good order; the peasants are treated well and therefore treat the land well. Platon tells Tchitchikov that his brother-in-law is a wonderful man with a kind heart who knows everything. Tchitchikov suddenly begins to feel very happy that he has made Skudronzhoglo's acquaintance.

Tchitchikov explains to Skudronzhoglo that he has agreed to visit the relatives of his benefactor, General Betrishtchev. They decide that Tchitchikov should go visit General Koshkaryov and then return that night. Once Tchitchikov returns from his visit, he has dinner with his host and new friend. Tchitchikov feels that he can learn a lot from Skudronzhoglo. Throughout dinner, the noble and wise man shares with Tchitchikov what he has done to accumulate his wealth. He explains that it is not in one's best interest to get rich quickly. It is instead smarter to invest in land and then work the land so that it pays the owner back. This is a long-term plan that will play off very well in the end. Tchitchikov begins seriously thinking about what Skudronzhoglo has suggested. Instead of buying dead souls, he could instead be buying his own piece of land.



Tchitchikov longs to put this new plan in action soon. Because he likes Tchitchikov so much, Skudronzhoglo agrees to lend Tchitchikov money to aid in buying a piece of property.

Part Two: Chapter 3 (pages 296- 331) Analysis

As this section of the novel begins, some time has passed between the time that Tchitchikov arrives to visit Andrey. He has set himself up as the General's trusted friend. Again Tchitchikov begins making very accomplished friends. He actually wastes no time getting on the good sides of Platon and Skudronzhoglo. It seems as though he hangs on to successful people like a leech, as though by being around them, he will gain some of their knowledge and wealth. Tchitchikov definitely sees this opportunity with Skudronzhoglo, a man who keeps an impeccable estate and is incredibly wealthy. Tchitchikov does not bring up his question of purchasing dead souls because he can see that Skudronzhoglo will not have anything to do with such a suggestion. Tchitchikov, instead, acts as though he is extremely interested in purchasing land. While Tchitchikov did want land in the end because he is not really the type to work land to produce money. He wanted to easily make his money, buy land and then have someone else make it profitable for him.



Part Two: Chapter 4 (pages 332 - 350)

Part Two: Chapter 4 (pages 332 - 350) Summary

The next day, the three men head off to look at a property for Tchitchikov. Hlobuev is selling his land and estate because he can no longer afford it. He has squandered away all his money. Although Hlobuev is not good with money, he is a very kind man at heart. He will do anything for friends and neighbors, even if it means his family may not eat for some time. He has a large amount of land, and two houses sit on it - one that is old and a new, larger, half-finished house. Tchitchikov can see that Hlobuev has greatly neglected the land, so he is not sure if he wants to take it over. He asks for Skudronzhoglo's opinion, who assures him that he can make something of the land. Skudronzhoglo says that he cannot stand to be there another minute and will leave Tchitchikov to his business. Hlobuev knows that Skudronzhoglo cannot bear to see how he has mistreated his wonderful home and land.

Tchitchikov and Platon ask Hlobuev if he has any relations who can help him out of his debt. He tells them he has an Aunt who is worth three million roubles. She gives to many charities, but will not help family members. Tchitchikov and Platon tell Hlobuev that he should try again, but he refuses.

Tchitchikov agrees to buy the estate. But only wants to pay twenty-five thousand roubles for it. Hlobuev disagrees with the price. He says he could easily get that from the bank, but he needs the money now to pay off his debts. Tchitchikov finally agrees and then pays Hlobuev some of the money up front, promising him that he will come back tomorrow with the rest of the money. Hlobuev is ecstatic and offers the men champagne to celebrate the sale. Platon questions how the man can have champagne to celebrate but no food to eat. This is simply the character of Hlobuev, who will bend over backwards for others, even when he cannot afford to do so. After three bottles of champagne, the men depart and make their way home.

At the end of this section there is another gap in the manuscript. When the novel continues, Tchitchikov is asking Lyenitsyn if he can buy dead souls from him. As Lyenitsyn ponders the deal, his wife walks into the room with their newborn son. Tchitchikov makes his way to the baby and begins to play with him. Lyenitsyn is so touched by the character of Tchitchikov that he begins to think he will give Tchitchikov the dead souls.

After this section, there is another gap in the manuscript.

Part Two: Chapter 4 (pages 332 - 350) Analysis

It seems as though Tchitchikov has finally decided to change his ways. He is finally buying a piece of land with the help of his new friend. The reader can tell that

Tchitchikov has not completely changed his ways because for a minute, he does think about stealing the money Skudronzhoglo let him borrow instead of buying the land.

Hlobuev is an interesting character to look at. Although he is plagued by his immoral love of money and fine things, he will do whatever he can to help a friend or make one feel comfortable. While Tchitchikov laughs at Hlobuev for having nothing, he could actually learn from him. Hlobuev may not have much, but he has the children and wife for which Tchitchikov one day longs. Hlobuev is also honest and kind. Tchitchikov's immoral character cannot think about anyone but himself.



Part Two: Chapter 5 (pages 351 - 384)

Part Two: Chapter 5 (pages 351 - 384) Summary

As Chapter 5 begins, a lot of time has passed. Tchitchikov, dressed in the finest of clothes, is at a meeting with a lawyer. It seems as though there is a dispute over a will. Tchitchikov may have been involved in the forgery of it. Tchitchikov's lawyer tells him not to worry about anything. He says that he will handle the situation. Tchitchikov completely trusts him and leaves the matter alone. He decides to go to a tailor's shop to have a new outfit made. Tchitchikov picks out the grandest and most expensive fabric he can find and then is fitted for his new attire.

As he is talking to the tailor, he hears his name and turns around. It is none other than Hlobuev and Afanasy Vassilyevitch. Tchitchikov is shocked to see Vassilyevitch. Tchitchikov obviously knows him from a long time ago. Vassilyevitch asks Hlobuev to step outside to speak with him. Once the two leave, Tchitchikov tells the tailor that he cannot believe that Vassilyevitch has ten million roubles. He is instantly jealous.

Outside, Hlobuev and Vassilyevitch talk about how Hlobuev's affairs are going since the death of his aunt. Vassilyevitch assumes that Hlobuev got something. Hlobuev did get thirty thousand roubles and a few servants. Hlobuev starts to tell Vassilyevitch about his sorrows and debts. He thinks that with one hundred thousand roubles, he could finally be out of debt. Vassilyevitch becomes sick of hearing Hlobuev complain about the money he needs. He tells him not to worry. If Hlobuev will agree to leave his wife and children and take on a life of service, Vassilyevitch says he will take care of Hlobuev's family and all his debts. Hlobuev is perplexed at first; he cannot see himself as a commoner, begging other wealthy people to help the poor. He tells Vassilyevitch he will think it over.

Hlobuev has important news to tell Vassilyevitch. He has heard that Tchitchikov has been implicated in a scandal. Apparently, he is involved in forging papers for Hlobuev's own aunt's estate. Currently there is a case building against Tchitchikov. Many petitions had begun pouring into the courts claiming that different people were the rightful heirs of the rich woman's estate. The courts of the town begin to dig deeply into the past of Tchitchikov. They discover his past bad situations with Customs and the Palace of Justice. They also learn of the scandal concerning dead souls in the town of N.

The next day when Tchitchikov is back at the tailor's shop, police officers arrive to arrest him. He is absolutely shocked. He begs for them to set him free, but they are very rough with Tchitchikov. He is then brought before the prince. The prince is extremely angry with Tchitchikov. He says that he once granted him mercy, but Tchitchikov did not follow directions. He says that Tchitchikov will now pay for his many indiscretions. Tchitchikov is very frightened. He is thrown into a prison cell and treated like an animal.



Surprisingly, Vassilyevitch comes to see Tchitchikov in prison. Tchitchikov throws himself at Vassilyevitch's feet and begs him for mercy. He wants him to use any contacts he can to get him out of jail. Tchitchikov promises that he will turn his life around and flees from jail.

Part Two: Chapter 5 (pages 351 - 384) Analysis

At this point of the novel, it is very hard to see what has happened to Tchitchikov. From what the reader can discern, it seems as though Tchitchikov has not learned his lesson. He has gotten caught up in some crazy, sordid plan instead of settling down to make his money the right way. Tchitchikov's obsession with Vassilyevitch is also interesting. This man has been able to successfully earn over ten million roubles, but lives like a normal man. Tchitchikov will never be able to earn money like this in an honest way.

Finally Tchitchikov has learned his lesson, and he is almost held accountable for his many indiscretions, but again he is saved! Time and time again, Tchitchikov talks his way out of his own potential downfall. This seems to be Gogol's whole point to the book and relates to his final call for change in Russian society. If Russians do not change, they will never get the immoral, corrupt people out of power. And thus, the serf system and remnants of the Napoleonic society will never end, and Russia will not be able to realize its full potential.



Characters

Pavel Invanovitch Tchitchikov

Tchitchikov is the protagonist of the novel. Throughout the first part of the book, Tchitchikov is considered the hero of the novel. He is very charming, educated, talented, quick witted and handsome. When Tchitchikov arrives to the town of N, he is immediately welcomed because of his wonderful, personable personality. Quickly, Tchitchikov's true intentions for coming to the town of N are revealed. While he has come to survey different parts of Russia, he also has come to buy the dead souls of serfs. Still, Tchitchikov seems to the reader to be honest and kind hearted. He is a collegiate scholar who fell on hard times. If he could only get the souls, he would be able to establish a life for himself and eventually have a family.

As the book progresses, the reader finally gets a more honest picture of the hero. Tchitchikov's desire to get rich fast is explained by his childhood. His father abandoned him because he could no longer care for him. When he died, he left Tchitchikov a decaying piece of property. Tchitchikov only had his education on which to fall back. In an effort to get rich quickly, he begins making immoral decisions. He accepts bribes and makes deals to take honest people's money. But each scheme that he comes up with ends badly, and Tchitchikov ends up with less money than before. Finally, when he is at his last dead end job, Tchitchikov discovers that he can buy dead people's souls.

Tchitchikov's character is very interesting because the narrator presents him as a noble, fine man. But the reader sees that once the narrator's character has left the novel, we learn much more about Tchitchikov's true character. It turns out he is a swindler. He is given many chances by many influential friends to create his wealth in an honorable way, but never learns his lesson.

The Narrator

The narrator of *Dead Souls*, takes on his own character. From the narrator's words, the reader can tell that he is, in fact, male. This is the only detail the reader can officially discern about the narrator. While in many books, the narrator seems to be a third person omniscient and somewhat unbiased participant, this narrator is quite opinionated. The narrator is the one who has decided Tchitchikov to be a hero. Throughout the novel, the narrator only sympathizes with Tchitchikov's problems. He only lets the reader know about Tchitchikov's good qualities. Only after the narrator's absence in Chapter 1 of Part 2, does the reader see the Tchitchikov's true nature.

The narrator also offers interesting views about the characters as well as the Russian culture. He goes into great detail about each character in order to satirize much of Russian culture, sometimes so much so that the description seems pointless. Because of his omniscient view, he knows every detail about everyone. This is especially seen in



his description of Tchitchikov, Andrey and the women of N. The narrator's observations about Russia also give the reader a better understanding of Russia in the nineteenth century. He is quick to point out the social order and behaviors of nobleman, landowners and servants.

Selifan

Selifan is one of Tchitchikov's servants. He is his coachman. The narrator never describes the character of Selifan in detail, because he is afraid he is wasting his reader's time. Selifan seems to be very gruff. Tchitchikov sees him as a waste because he often gets drunk and forgets about his duties. On one specific occasion, Selifan gets drunk and attempts to drive Tchitchikov in a bad storm. Tchitchikov is so angry with him that he severely berates Selifan. Sadly, Selifan cannot quit working for Tchitchikov because he is a serf.

Petrushka

Petrushka is Tchitchikov's other serf. More specifically, he is Tchitchikov's footman. He is a very peculiar man. Petrushka enjoys reading and finding new words. He always wears the same shirt, pants and jacket every day. Many times Tchitchikov will yell at Petrushka because of the way he smells. This is very interesting because Petrushka is a servant and therefore does not have access to baths or perfumes. Tchitchikov yells at him for something Petrushka cannot control.

Manilov

Manilov is a kind, overly-caring, sensitive man. He will always put his friends before himself. Tchitchikov meets Manilov when he first arrives in the town of N. Manilov is immediately smitten with Tchitchikov and wants to become fast friends. Manilov has many good intentions, which can be seen by the way he keeps his home. It seems that Manilov has tried to make the home respectable and grand, but each room is unfinished. It is as if he takes up new projects before the prior project is completed. Manilov is also the first landowner that Tchitchikov talks to about buying the dead souls. Although Manilov is quick to sell Tchitchikov the souls, the reader can sense his hesitation. But because he is afraid he will look uneducated, he agrees to sell Tchitchikov the souls.

Madame Korobotcha

Madame Korobotcha is the second person from whom Tchitchikov buys dead souls. After leaving Manilov's house, Tchitchikov gets caught in a storm. He asks Madame Korobotcha if she will house him for the night. Madame Korobotcha seems to be a kind old woman. She offers Tchitchikov shelter and food. She seems very friendly and easy to talk to. When Tchitchikov asks her if she will sell him her dead souls, she becomes



extremely suspicious and leery of Tchitchikov. She offers to sell some other goods that are produced on her estate, but Tchitchikov will buy nothing else. Tchitchikov finally talks the old woman into the deal, but Madame Korobotcha is never fully satisfied. She becomes so perplexed and worried that she has been cheated that she goes into the town of N. to see what the normal selling price is for dead souls. Madame Korobotcha is the reason that the rumors start about Tchitchikov in town.

Nozdroyov

Nozdroyov is the third person from whom Tchitchikov attempts to buy souls. He met Nozdroyov while in town. Nozdroyov is talkative, aggressive, charming and sly. He is also, as the reader finds out, a bully. Nozdroyov is the type of man that can talk to and charm everyone. He does this to Tchitchikov, who believes that he should be able to trust Nozdroyov with his secret. Nozdroyov demands to know why Tchitchikov wants the souls. Nozdroyov challenges Tchitchikov to a card game for the souls. When Tchitchikov declines and decides to leave, Nozdroyov violently tries to attack him. Nozdroyov is only stopped when he is arrested.

Nozdroyov continues to make Tchitchikov's life difficult. When Tchitchikov is accused of plotting to run away with the governor's daughter, Nozdroyov is the man who confirms the other nobleman's fears. He is committed to making Tchitchikov's life difficult. At a large gathering, he announces to everyone in attendance that Tchitchikov has been trying to purchase dead souls. He also confirms false, vicious rumors about Tchitchikov.

Sobakevitch

Sobakevitch is a sturdy, solid and stoic man. He will not allow an agreeable thing to be said about anyone. He is very sensible, wise, honest, and hard working. This is why it is shocking when he agrees to sell Tchitchikov his dead souls. Although Sobakevitch does not want to be taken for a fool, he easily sells his souls over to Tchitchikov.

Plyushkin

Plyushkin is an ill-dressed, lazy and grieving landowner. After his wife and son die, he lets his land severely deteriorate. Because he does not care to take care of the land, his peasants become lazy, and his estate is decaying. People who do not know Plyushkin automatically assume he has mistreated his peasants. Because of his inability to care for them, many have died. Although the reader expects Plyushkin to be rude and cruel, he turns out to be very sheepish and somewhat kind. He agrees to sell Tchitchikov the souls.

Ivan Antonovitch

Ivan Antonovitch is the clerk that helps Tchitchikov finish his purchase of dead souls.



President of the Court

One of Tchitchikov's very influential friends. He helps Tchitchikov to get his purchase of souls approved.

Govenor's Daughter

The governor's daughter is a young, beautiful and shy girl. She has just come home from boarding school. Tchitchikov first encounters the girl while riding in his chaise. The two chaises' reins become entangled. Tchitchikov is captured by the girl's remarkable beauty.

Pubilc Prosecutor

The public prosecutor is so upset about Tchitchkov's scheme of buying dead souls that he has a heart attack and dies.

Sofia Ivanovna and Anna Grigoryevna

Sofia Ivanovna and Anna Grigoryevna are the two women that begin spreading rumors about Tchitchikov. They are examples of how much power exists behind idle gossip. The story they create about Tchitchikov is spread and exaggerated around the entire town.

Andrey Ivanovitch Tyentyetnikov

Andrey Ivanovitch Tyentyetnikov is a young, unmarried landowner. He was at one time a scholar but then left the field to tend to his family's estate. When he attempts to look after the home and servants, he is a complete failure. He becomes so upset by his failure that he decides he will not ever leave bed again. It is not until Tchitchikov comes to visit that Andrey gets out of bed.

General Betrishtchev

General Betrishtchev becomes Tchitchikov's benefactor. He first meets Tchitchikov when he pays a visit to General Betrishtchev's home. The reader does not learn much about the General because shortly after the introduction of this character, a large portion of the manuscript is missing.

Ulinka

Ulinka is the daughter of the general. At one time, she was very much in love with Andrey.



Platon Mihailovitch Platonov

Platonov becomes friends with Tchitchikov and decides to accompany him on a trip throughout Russia. He also introduces him to his brother-in-law, Skudronzhoglo.

Skudronzhoglo

Skudronzhoglo is a very successful Russian landowner. He lends Tchitchikov money so that he can purchase his own piece of property.

Hlobuev

Hlobuev owns a piece of decaying property near Skudronzhoglo's home. Hlobuev is a kindhearted, simple man. He would rather spend money on entertaining a friend, than buying other necessities for himself and his family. Although his priorities are not in order, he attempts to be kind to everyone.

Afanasy Vassilyevitch

Vassilyevitch is another friend of Tchitchikov. He is very rich and uses his power to get Tchitchikov out of jail. Because of the gap in the manuscript, there is not much known about the character of Vassilyevitch.



Objects/Places

Town of N.

This is where Tchitchikov visits. The entire town goes into an uproar over Tchitchikov's plan to purchase dead souls.

St Petersburg

St Petersburg is often referred to as the standard for doing things in the trendiest or most popular ways.

Souls

When characters in the novel refer to having "souls," they are speaking about the number of peasants or serfs they own.

Nozdroyov's Home

This is where Nozdroyov attacks Tchitchikov.

Chaise

A chaise is a carriage. This is how many people traveled in this time period.

Hlobeuv's Estate

Tchitchikov decides to buy the decaying estate from Hlobeuv. This place is important because it is the first time Tchitchikov figures he will settle down and make his money honestly by working the land around him.

Roubles

Roubles are a type of currency used in Russia.

Kopecs

Kopecs are another form of currency used in Russia.



The Country Side of N.

The country side of N is very important because it is where Tchitchikov goes to visit friends that will sell him some of their dead souls. These places include Manilov, Madame Korobotcha, Sobakevitch, and Plyushkin's homes.

Andrey's House

This is where Tchitchikov goes to live after he flees the town of N. He makes the home his own and causes Andrey to take the initiative to clean up his estate.

Themes

Caricatures of Russian Men

Nikolai Gogol wrote *Dead Souls* as a satire of post-Napoleonic Russian life. In this time, everyday life was still heavily regulated by the serf system. Landowners were measured in wealth by the amount of souls (peasants) and land they owned. Gogol pokes fun at the entire setup through each and every one of his characters. This is first, and most clearly, seen through the words of the narrator. Although the narrator is never given a name or place in society, it is obvious he has an affinity for the upper class - and this is how many people of the time felt everyone should feel. While describing Tchitchikov and other influential people, he writes page upon page describing their characteristics. This is not the case when he describes Selifan and Petrushka, because these men are simple peasants, and therefore do not deserve to be given any of the reader's time.

Furthermore, with each of the people Tchitchikov meets, Gogol makes the character more ridiculous and larger than life. For example, Manilov is overly kind and empathetic. He will go to great heights to please any of his friends. His actions become ridiculous when he insists that Tchitchikov walk before him into his own home. Tchitchikov refuses, but Manilov will not stand for it, so both men attempt to enter the doorway at the same time. They get stuck and have to squeeze through, thus losing any decorum they may have had to begin with.

Gogol does not only do this with Manilov, but also the character of Andrey. Because of his failure as a landowner, Andrey reverts to being a hermit. He remains in his night clothes day and night and refuses to leave home out of fear of facing the failure that surrounds him in his estate. In real life, many men would not resort to closing themselves off to the world to overcome their problems. While any one might run away from problems for a time, Andrey's actions are very melodramatic and overly drastic. Another example is that of Sobakevitch, whose solid, silent, sturdy frame closely resembles his large, simple home. He is not prone to luxurious living or situations. While there were many men like this in Gogol's time, as there are today, the character's extreme behavior and words work to satirize the details of Russian society in this time period.

Satire of Russian Life

The narrator often makes references to the greatness of the Russian people, lands and culture and refuses to allow his characters to speak in French. Throughout the novel, he compares the greatness of Russia to many other European powers. While Gogol is sure to show how great and beautiful Russia is, he realizes the need for change in people who have, for too long, been influenced by other cultures.



This is most seen in the description of the women of the town of N. Gogol describes them as being beautiful and interested in all fine things, but he also notes their irresistible desire to tear one another (and the men with whom they are associated) apart. The women let petty, materialistic things come between them. The narrator describes them as being just as charming and cultured as women in Petersburg and the rest of Europe. The trends in Petersburg are copied from other European countries, then "Russianized" and then further adapted to an individual town culture, such as N., throughout the Russian providence.

The women in N. are the ones who spread rumors concerning Tchitchikov. Once they find out about the stranger's "true" intentions, they waste no time spreading the rumors. It is ridiculous how fast the rest of the town reacts. People come out of seclusion to hear news of the stranger. Here, Gogol crafts a brilliantly satirical situation. The people of N. are so caught up by the strangeness of this visitor that they ridiculously overreact to the circumstances surrounding the scandal. Gogol is calling for change. Obviously, idle gossip and conniving women are a part of everyday life, but the absurd circumstances highlights people's inability to accept change, and their fascination with anything that is different and not considered the norm.

Immorality

As stated before, Gogol wrote the book as a satirical call for change throughout Russian life. As an observer of his time, he could see the effects of immorality in his society. This is most clearly seen through the character of Tchitchikov. While the narrator attempts to lead the story so that the reader only sees one side of Tchitchikov, soon the dual nature of his character is revealed.

As the book begins, Tchitchikov is made out to be the hero of the novel. The narrator sees him as an honest, humble and intelligent man, who is seeking to make his life a little better. While the reader may wonder why Tchitchikov does not put his charismatic personality and intelligence to good use and get a respectable job in the first part of the novel, this question is finally answered in later parts of the book. It seems as though Tchitchikov's hard working, gentlemanly personality is also accompanied, by a darker, seedier side that intends to get rich quickly. The reader can understand that Tchitchikov had a hard childhood and that he longs to change his life to that he can leave a legacy for his children, but Tchitchikov attempts many different schemes in which he cheats others out of their money and land.

Tchitchikov 's immorality eventually gets the best of him. It is as though Gogol feels this should happen because Tchitchikov is almost placed in jail and killed, but Gogol saves Tchitchikov. While there is immorality in Russia, the Russian people should do whatever they can to change it. The people who are at the root of the evil will not leave; they will try again and again to bring others down. Until Russians can ban together to eradicate a system of immoral officials and cheating nobility, the Russian Empire will not change.



Style

Point of View

The first part of the book is told from the point of the view of the narrator. It seems to be an omniscient third person view, but the narrator also puts his own opinions in the book. He also hides things from the reader. Normally this omniscient view gives the reader the opportunity to know everything, but because the narrator is so enamored with Tchitchikov, he decides to hide his ill characteristics and only tell the reader about how much of a hero Tchitchikov is.

The story is for the most part told through the narrator's descriptions of the characters and their actions. While there is dialog, it seems to take a backseat to the narrator's voice. The reader, however, does get a glimpse of each character's thoughts because of the omniscient view. As Tchitchikov is conducting his deals to buy souls from different landowners, the reader can tell Tchitchikov is somewhat phony. He presents a calm, pleasant, and kind outward disposition but is also thinking discourteous or rude things about the person to whom he is talking.

In the second part of the book, there is also an omniscient third person point of view, but it is unbiased because the narrator has vanished. This is where the reader leans more about the Tchitchikov who has stolen from others and plotted to steal, lie and cheat to get ahead in life.

Setting

For the most part, the novel takes place in the town N. Tchitchikov has decided to visit the town so that he can pursue his desire to buy the town's dead souls. It is here that he meets Manilov, Nozdroyov, Sobakevitch and other landowners. In town, Tchitchikov first stays at a hotel. He then goes about the outskirts of town, meeting his new, influential friends who live in the country side.

Tchitchikov spends much of his time in the countryside because this is where many people who own peasants reside. The narrator often talks about how beautiful and picturesque the Russian countryside is. Manilov's estate is the first place Tchitchikov visits. Manilov's house is very nice, but he has never finished furnishing it. Next, Tchitchikov goes to Madam Korbobatch's home because he gets lost in a storm. After staying the night, he goes begins to make his way to the Sobakevitch's estate but is again waylaid. Nozdroyov insists that Tchitchikov visit his home.

Tchitchikov's visit with Nozdroyov is short lived because Nozdroyov attempts to beat Tchitchikov when he refuses to play cards with Nozdroyov. Finally, Tchitchikov is off to Sobakevitch's house. Sobakevitch owns a very nice bit of land that is sturdy and kept in order. After Tchitchikov is finished seeing Sobakevitch, he decides to visit Plyushkin. Plyushkin's land is very poorly cared for because he has been grieving the death of his



wife and son for many years. He agrees to sell Tchitchikov the souls because he believes that Tchitchikov is trying to help him. After Tchitchikov visits Plyushkin, he decides it is time to go back into town.

While back in town, rumors begin to spread about Tchitchikov. The first is that he has bought a large amount of souls and must be a millionaire. When everyone finds out that Tchitchikov actually bought dead souls, soon people begin to believe other rumors they have heard about Tchitchikov. Soon the rumors become vicious, and Tchitchikov is forced to leave the town in embarrassment.

When the second part of the book begins, Tchitchikov comes to Andrey's estate. He stays with Andrey for a short amount of time. There is a gap in the manuscript, so we are not actually sure where Tchitchikov is. He does go to visit his new friend Skudronzhoglo's home. Tchitchikov is so inspired by Skudronzhoglo's ability to work the land, that he decides to go and see about buying his own land. On Skudronzhoglo's suggestion, Tchichikov goes to see Hlobuev's land. While the land has not been cared for or worked, Tchitchikov decides to buy it.

Again, there is another gap in the novel. In an unknown town, Tchitchikov goes to tailor's shop and is also put in jail. These are the last settings of the book because the manuscript is incomplete.

Language and Meaning

Gogol's language is somewhat straightforward. But the reader must question if this is because of the translation. Because the book was originally written in Russian, for English readers, it has been translated in different time periods as well as by different translators. This can have an effect on the language of the book. Depending on the translation, different words and descriptions are used, which can elicit a different response from the original work.

Even with these obstacles, the reader can tell that the writing style is satirical and that Gogol has tried to show Russian life through huge generalities and specific examples of people in one social group. Gogol does an excellent job of describing each of the landowners. The reader feels as though they have met these larger-than-life personalities.

In this translation, the writing style can be hard to follow. The narrator chooses to give so much detail that it is sometimes hard for the reader to understand. At times, the description seems unnecessary. Take for instance, the very long description of Andrey. Tchitchikov only stays with him for a short while, so the description of his life story seems trivial and unnecessary.



Structure

Dead Souls is organized into two parts. The first part of the novel is a satire of Russian life and the nobility. In each chapter, Tchitchikov is introduced to a different character that resembles a type of Russian person. Gogol structures the novel so that each encounter is like its own short story and can easily stand by itself.

The second part of the novel is structured much differently. While Gogol introduces the reader to more characters, the narrator, who has for so long led the story, has vanished. He no longer only shows the honest side of Tchitchikov. It now shows his conniving, scheming side. This part of the novel is also much less satirical and also seems darker. It is also hard to understand this part of the novel because much of the manuscript is missing. Gogol died before he could finish the book, so the second part's meaning is not fully realized. Because of this, it seems as though part one and two could be two completely separate books.

Quotes

"And to what purpose, to what could dead souls be put? And why is the governor's daughter mixed up in it? If he wanted to elope with her, why should he buy dead souls?" (Part One: Chapter 8, pg 194)

"And for long years to come I am destined by some strange fate to walk hand in hand with my odd heroes, to gaze at life in its vast movement, to gaze upon it through laughter seen by the world and tears unseen and unknown by it! And far away still is the time when the terrible storm of inspiration will burst into another stream, and my head be wreathed with holy terror and brilliance, and men will hear with a confused tremour the majestic thunder of other words." (Part One: Chapter 7, pg 135)

"But our hero was a man of mature years and of a cool and calculating temper. He too grew pensive and reflected but more practically, his reflections were not so irresponsible but were, one may say, very much to the point." (Part One: Chapter 5, pg 97)

"...and after a minute's reflection he informed him he needed the dead souls to obtain a position in society, that at present he had not big estates, so that until he had, he would be glad of souls of any sort." (Part One: Chapter 4, pg 79)

"Tchitchikov's strange request suddenly cut across all his dreams. It seemed as though his brain could not assimilate the idea, and however much he turned it about he could not explain it to himself, and so he sat on, smoking his pipe till suppertime." (Part One: Chapter 2, pg 38)

"He thought, too, he ought to make haste to buy what runaway and dead souls any one had left, for the landowners were one after another hurrying to mortgage their estates, and soon there would not be a spot left in Russia that was not mortgaged to the Government." (Part One: Chapter 4, pg 331)

"... that he began to think seriously of obtaining not an imaginary but a real estate. He at one determined with the money he would get by mortgaging the imaginary souls to obtain an estate that would not be imaginary." (Part One: Chapter 4, pg 330).

"The sluggard got back into his dressing gown again. His life was again spent in lying about and doing nothing. Dirt and disorder reigned in the house. The broom remained in the room together with the dust for days together; his trousers even made their way into the drawing room; on the elegant table in front of the sofa lay a pair of greasy braces as though it were a tit-bit for a guest." (Part One: Chapter 1, pg 274)

"The point is that it is our task to save our country, that our country is in danger now, not from the invasion of twenty foreign races, but from ourselves; that, besides our lawful



government another rule has been set up, far stronger than any lawful one." (Part Two: Chapter 5, pg 384).

"It sometimes seems to me that the Russian is a lost man. He has no strength of will, no courage to preserve. One wants to do everything and one can do nothing, one is always thinking that from tomorrow one will begin a new life, that from tomorrow one will set to work as one ought, that from tomorrow one will put oneself on a diet." (Part Two: Chapter 4, pg 336)

"And not because your money's growing- money is only money- but because it is all the work of you hands; because you see that you are in a way the cause and creator of it all, and you, like some magician, are scattering abundance and welfare on every side. Where will you find me a delight equal to that?" (Part Two: Chapter 3, pg 327)

"And Russia, art not thou flying onwards like a spirited troika that nothing can overtake? The road is smoking under thee, the bridges rumble, everything falls back and is left behind." (Part One: Chapter 11, pg 251)



Topics for Discussion

Do you think Part One of *Dead Souls* could have stood alone by itself as a book?

How do you think your interpretation of the novel might change if you were to read a different translation of the book?

Is Gogol successful in his attempt at satire? Why or why not?

Do you think the character of the narrator is necessary? Why or Why not?

Is the narrator effective in giving a realistic view of Tchitchikov? Do you think he is unbiased? Was the purpose of the narrator, not only to narrate the story, but to act as another Russian nobleman, hiding the faults of his people, country and government?

Do you think "hero" is the correct description of Tchitchikov in the novel?

Why do you think the narrator is missing from Part Two of the book? Do you think the reader is able to learn more about Tchitchikov in this section?