

Eugene Onegin Study Guide

Eugene Onegin by Aleksandr Pushkin

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Plot Summary

Alexander Pushkin's poem/novel tells the story of two sets of lovers. Eugene Onegin, the hardened socialite, rejects the love of passionate Tatyana Larin, while his friend, poet and romantic Vladimir Lensky, falls head over heels for her sister Olga. Onegin's annoyance at Vladimir leads him to pretend to seduce Olga, and Vladimir challenges Eugene to a duel to revenge his love. Eugene kills Vladimir. In his sorrow, he leaves his country estate forever. Years later, Eugene meets Tatyana, now a confident, cold beauty, married to a prince. He falls madly in love with her; however, although she still loves him, Tatyana must reject Eugene as he rejected her years ago.

Eugene Onegin is a socialite whose hobby is seducing women. He preys on young beauties at all the Moscow social events, understanding all the arts of attracting them. However, Eugene becomes bored with this meaningless seduction. While he's still a young man, Eugene's uncle dies, leaving Eugene a country estate. He goes to live in the country as a recluse, bored with everything, including country life.

Eugene makes friends with his neighbor, Vladimir Lensky, a poet. The two friends spend their evenings in conversation, and Eugene curbs his caustic wit in the face of Vladimir's romanticism. Vladimir is madly in love with a young local girl named Olga Larin, and he writes poetry that sings her praises.

When Vladimir brings Eugene to meet the Larins, Olga's solemn, shy sister Tatyana falls in love with the brooding Eugene. She is tortured by her feelings and finally writes Eugene a love letter, laying her feelings out before him. Eugene, though, is disillusioned with love, and he rejects Tatyana, warning her not to be so open with her feelings lest a young man take advantage of her. Tatyana is miserable.

Vladimir convinces Eugene to come with him to Tatyana's name-day celebration, and when they get there, Eugene finds that it's a huge social event with all the locals in attendance. Tatyana is visibly disturbed at Eugene's presence, and Eugene curses Vladimir for bringing him. He plans to revenge himself on Vladimir, and later, when the dancing begins, Eugene stays by Olga's side. He manages to monopolize Olga's time and attention, dancing every dance with her. Vladimir is enraged and leaves the dance in a huff.

Vladimir challenges Eugene to a duel, and Eugene accepts. The two men meet, and Eugene shoots his friend dead. Horrified at what he's done, Eugene leaves his country estate forever. He travels around the world, trying to forget his sorrow. Meanwhile, Tatyana spends her time in Eugene's library, learning about him from his notes in his books and brooding over her lost love. Olga, after briefly mourning her lover, marries a soldier and goes off with him to start a new life.

Tatyana, however, rejects all offers of marriage. Her mother finally brings her to Moscow to find Tatyana a husband. Two years later, Eugene returns to find Tatyana married to a prince. He falls instantly in love with this self-possessed, confident, cool woman. Initially,



Tatyana ignores all Eugene's letters and advances, and Eugene goes into seclusion again. Finally, he goes to visit his love and finds Tatyana crying over one of his letters. Tatyana confesses that she still loves Eugene, but she is now another man's wife. She must reject him, as Eugene rejected her so long ago.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Alexander Pushkin's poem/novel tells the story of two sets of lovers. Eugene Onegin, the hardened socialite, rejects the love of passionate Tatyana Larin, while his friend, poet and romantic Vladimir Lensky, falls head over heels for her sister Olga. Onegin's annoyance at Vladimir leads him to pretend to seduce Olga, and Vladimir challenges Eugene to a duel to revenge his love. Eugene kills Vladimir. In his sorrow, he leaves his country estate forever. Years later, Eugene meets Tatyana, now a confident, cold beauty, married to a prince. He falls madly in love with her; however, although she still loves him, Tatyana must reject Eugene as he rejected her years ago.

As the novel begins, Eugene Onegin is on his way to stay with his ailing uncle and thinks to himself that getting sick is the only thing his uncle's done to deserve respect. The prospect of looking after a sick uncle has already bored Eugene to tears, and Eugene, who is his uncle's heir, wishes his uncle dead. Eugene was born by the Neva River in Russia to a father who could not handle money and went into debt. Growing up, Eugene was cared for by a series of tutors. When he hit manhood, Eugene let go Monsieur l'Abbé, his last tutor.

Eugene follows all the fashion trends, speaks French, dances well, and people consider him educated, particularly since he is witty and eloquent. He has learned enough Latin to inject quotations into his conversation. He's avoided studying science or classical literature but knows economics, although he was unable to convince his father not to mortgage his lands. Eugene's best-learned art, though, is love.

Eugene is able to manipulate women through giving or withholding attention, acting jealous, sending passionate letters, or either flattering or ignoring the object of his desire. He elicits the woman to proclaim her feelings, then meets her in secret to bed her. He has the power to manipulate even experienced flirts, and he is also talented at overcoming rivals for a woman's affection, attacking them with his witty tongue. Married men, however, still remain friends with Eugene, despite his ability to seduce women of all sorts, including wives.

Eugene is a man of leisure, sleeping in mornings. On a typical day his valet enters Eugene's room in the morning with invitations to three parties. Eugene considers which he'll go to, deciding finally to make an appearance at all three. He spends his morning strolling about town until dinner time.

Eugene calls a carriage and heads to a well-known restaurant, certain that he'll be late to meet with an equally well-known man-about-town. Arriving, he's greeted with wine, roast, and truffles, a gourmet meal. In fact, the meal deserves a little more wine. The ballet's in town, and Eugene heads to the theater to see his favorite entertainment. Onegin is a connoisseur of the ballet.



The narrator pauses to praise the Russian theater, naming playwrights of the time as well as the French choreographer of the St. Petersburg ballet, Didelot. The narrator calls out in fond remembrance of time spent in the theater.

The theater is packed, full of glamour and excited fans. The ballerina gracefully dances, with elegant jumps and turns. Onegin comes and takes his seat. He begins examining the people, potential women to seduce sitting among his friends and acquaintances. He yawns at the performance. Suddenly, Onegin is bored with the theater. He leaves in the middle of the show, heading home to primp.

Eugene's home is furnished with all the luxuries of London and Paris, and especially all the implements of personal grooming and preening. After all, beautifying the hair and nails is a fashion of the times, and Eugene is a slave to those fashions, spending three hours a day in front of the mirror. He leaves again, to head to a ball. He arrives and joins the noisy throng of music and dancing and women.

The narrator breaks into the story again to comment how he, too, used to spend his time at balls, chasing after women. He warns mothers not to let their daughters out of sight at such dances and fondly remembers young women's well-cut gowns and shapely feet, especially two particular feet that still fill his dreams. His favorite object among all women is the foot of Terpsichore, a muse of dance and lyric poetry, and he remembers women's feet, glimpsed beneath the table or standing on a stone by the seashore, with the waves pressing in on them in admiration. The, he describes holding a stirrup for a woman's graceful foot, which inspires him to passion. However, in the end, the narrator says that women's words and women's feet are both faithless.

Eugene falls into bed in the early hours of the morning, as the rest of the town is waking. He'll sleep until the afternoon, and then he'll start the game again. This social life of dances, theater, and women soon tires Eugene, and he becomes depressed and tired of life. The first thing he gives up is women, the high-ranking women with ridiculous talk and prudent attitudes and the girls who act on the whims of passion. He tries to write but cannot. Then, he turns to study, but he becomes frustrated with the dogma of writers.

The narrator befriends Eugene, who is witty and sarcastic. The two spend time together by the Neva River. The narrator dreams of traveling on the sea, and finding happier places with more forgiving climates: the lips of a young woman on a Venetian gondola, or the warms of Africa. Russia, though, is home of the narrator's first love and dead heart. He plans with Eugene to travel the world, but the two are separated. Eugene's father dies, and Eugene turns over the estate to creditors. Then, word comes that Eugene's uncle is ill and dying, and Eugene heads to his uncle's home, already bored with the idea of sickbed duty. However, when Eugene arrives, his uncle has already passed away.

Neighbors and acquaintances gather in Eugene's uncle's house for a funeral celebration, eating and drinking. When it is over, Eugene is left to his new country estate. At first, he finds the country lands amusing, but soon he's as bored with the



country as he was with the city. He falls again into depression. The narrator, however, makes sure to mention how much he loves country life and nature, so that the reader doesn't imagine Eugene is merely a disguised self-portrait.

The narrator notes that the reader must be asking who the poem is written for, and who inspired the poet. The poet denies that it's written for anyone and says that the poetic muse only joined him when love had already left. Poetry takes the place of passion and heals a lover's wounds. When he is completely cured of love, then he'll write a truly great poem. Meanwhile, the first chapter of this poem is ended, and the poet finds it ready for readers and critics.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Alexander Pushkin writes his classic novel in verse. Almost all of the stanzas of the poem follow the same pattern, a fourteen line stanza, reminiscent of the sonnet form. However, Pushkin uses a unique rhyme scheme: A-B-A-B-C-C-D-D-E-F-F-E-G-G. He also uses an eight-syllable line with a two syllable foot, iambic tetrameter. The translator maintains this form in translating the poem into English. The formal poetic structure creates a traditional and restrained feeling throughout the novel.

The portrait of Eugene Onegin that begins the novel is as caustic as Eugene himself. Far from being well educated, Eugene is instead very competent in all the social graces. He is able to follow the highest fashion, dance, and speak French, skills that are only useful for social events. His greatest accomplishments are his eloquence and wit, and his underlying knowledge is limited. Pushkin draws a contrast between what is commonly perceived and what has true underlying value. Common perception says that Eugene is a wonderful fellow and highly educated, but the truth is that Eugene's attractions are largely superficial.

Eugene's obsession with "love" also draws a contrast between the real and the superficial. His passions are not true passions of the heart. Instead, Eugene is a master manipulator, aping the attitudes of love without any real feelings. He shows no compunction about hurting either the women he seduces or the men who love them. He seems almost unable to see the real feeling that exists below the surface.

The lifestyle that Eugene leads is entirely wrapped up in other people and social entertainments. He has nothing in his life beyond parties, balls, and the theater. Because of this, Eugene is easily bored. The lack of substance in his lifestyle wears him easily, and part of Eugene's drive to push from one event to another without stopping is due to the meaninglessness of each stop.

The narrator and poet is a strong voice in Pushkin's poem/novel, and he interjects his own opinions and comments throughout the novel. Because of this, Pushkin himself, although not part of the main story, becomes a character. He comments on other poets, social life, the theater, and Russia. Pushkin's experience echoes Eugene's experiences with society, entertainment, and women.



When Pushkin remembers women fondly, he remembers most their feet. This fascination with an external symbol of womanly desire shows that the narrator shares some of Eugene's superficiality. Women's feet are faithless, the narrator comments, and that is because faithfulness comes from the mind and the character, not from the physical body. Focusing on the external and superficial breeds inconstancy and artificiality. Like Eugene, the narrator has left love and passion behind, perhaps because of this superficial approach to romance.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The estate that Eugene dislikes so much is actually a beautiful country house and grounds. Eugene, though, has no care for the elegant house or the estate. As the new master he institutes rent instead of unpaid labor for the peasants, which upsets his neighbors. Eugene does not like his neighbors either and keeps a horse ready to ride off if a visitor is approaching. Soon, the local landowners stop coming by and spread rumors that he's crazy, a drunk, or a freemason.

At the same time, Vladimir Lensky, a poet, returns to his nearby estate from Germany. Unlike Eugene, Vladimir still longs for love, and he believes that poetry is salvation. At eighteen, he is full of youth's idealism, and his poetry is filled with images of love. Vladimir is bored with the rural gatherings of unintellectual landowners, and he is more interested in developing a friendship with Eugene. However, the locals see Vladimir as a desirable suitor and invite him to meet their eligible daughters, a dire prospect for Vladimir. Finally, he meets Eugene, and they become immediate friends.

Such deep friendships don't exist anymore, the narrator comments. Although Eugene hates people, Vladimir is the exception to the rule. Eugene curbs his cynicism in the face of Vladimir's youthful idealism and naivete, and the two spend their time talking and arguing on every subject. Their favorite subject, though, is the human emotions and passions that Eugene has so gladly escaped, but to which Vladimir is enslaved.

Vladimir is deeply in love, in the way of youthful poets. The object of his affections is Olga, the daughter of one of his father's friends, who has blossomed into womanhood. Olga is a beautiful, lively young woman, much as the heroine of almost any romance. The narrator notes that, though lovely, she is slightly boring, and begs to tell the reader of Olga's older sister.

Tatyana, Olga's sister, is not as traditionally beautiful as Olga. Instead, she is retiring and introspective. She does not show physical affection to her family and prefers contemplation to play. Tatyana, though, is a dreamer. She doesn't fit in with the other girls, who follow fashion and gossip and want children and a home. Instead, she prefers dark stories and time alone. She often wakes in the early morning to watch the sun rise and reads romance novels, which her father looks upon as a minor vice.

Tatyana's mother doesn't exactly read the romances her daughter enjoys, but she loves them because her cousin spoke so highly of them. As a girl, her mother was engaged to her father, an arranged marriage that brings Tatyana's mother much sorrow, because she is in love with another man, Grandison, a dandy and a gambler. Both are slaves to fashion. Tatyana's mother doesn't have any say in her marriage, but her husband brings her away to his estate. After crying and throwing fits, she settles down and begins ruling the house with an iron fist, becoming the family matriarch. Her passion for elegance and



fashion leaves her, and soon she begins appearing in a housecoat and cap. Her husband, however, trusts her completely and also takes to eating in his bathrobe. The family settles into a routine of spending time with casual friends over tea and supper, celebrating Russian traditional feasts, and practicing traditional religion and social order.

Tatyana's father dies, beloved by many. Vladimir mourns the passing of his father's friend, remembering spending time with him as a child. He writes a poem in memory of the man, who always dreamed Vladimir would marry Olga, and he writes in memory of his dead parents, as well. The narrator comments on the inevitability of death, and how each generation passes away. He hopes that his poetry lives on after he is gone.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Eugene has completely withdrawn from life as the second chapter begins. He cannot appreciate the beauty of nature or his country estate any more than he can appreciate the attractions of high society. In the country as well as the city, clearly societal opinions play a large role in life. Eugene finds that his country neighbors comment on him just as cattily as society men and women do. Every move he makes is watched constantly by others. The force of public opinion is a powerful motivator in Pushkin's story.

Vladimir Lensky is introduced in this chapter. Vladimir functions as a literary foil for Eugene. While Eugene cannot write poetry, Vladimir is a poet. While Eugene is jaded by society, Vladimir is fresh and young. While Eugene cannot love or understand love, Vladimir is obsessed with love. While Eugene is dissatisfied with the superficial, Vladimir is overcome with passion due to the superficial attractions of his lover, Olga. The two men become friends, but they are essentially opposites. Perhaps Vladimir embodies for Eugene the type of youthful passions he can no longer feel.

Just as Vladimir and Eugene are opposites, Tatyana and Olga are opposites. Olga is a social butterfly and an unthinking beauty, while Tatyana is unconventional, caught up in her own inner self and isolated in her feelings. Olga, in fact, embodies all the superficiality that Eugene has rebelled against, while Tatyana embodies what is beyond the superficial. The attraction of Tatyana is not beautiful feet or a lovely face and figure. Tatyana's beauty is in her emotional life. She communes with nature and with her inner self, and her separateness from society makes her attractive.

The story of Tatyana's mother is a commentary on love and passion. Although Dame Larin believes that she's deeply in love and falls into weeping fits, she soon forgets her passions. She becomes a mother and wife, leaving her youthful obsessions behind her. Does all love fail as time goes on? Is passion something that cannot endure as time passes? Dame Larin's story introduces these questions.

The story of Tatyana's father's death, and the narrator's comments on each generation passing away and giving place to the next, a cycle of life and death, echoes back to the questions raised by Dame Larin's death. Like life, youth and love goes through a cycle. Long before physical death, passion dies as people grow older.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Vladimir is leaving Eugene, and Eugene chides him on being in such a hurry, asking him where he spends every evening. Vladimir says he goes to the Larins's house, which Eugene supposes is dreary. Vladimir counters that he enjoys the family life. Eugene asks to meet Vladimir's beloved, and Vladimir suggests that he come along that night.

Vladimir and Eugene arrive at the Larins home and find a traditional Russian gathering, just as Eugene imagined. On the way home later, Eugene is yawning with boredom. Eugene asks which girl was Tatyana, and Vladimir explains that she's the quiet one who sat by the window. Eugene says that, if he were a poet, he would rather have Tatyana than Olga, who Eugene finds dull in her perfection.

The visit makes the neighbors gossip that Eugene is going to marry Tatyana. Tatyana herself secretly falls in love with Eugene. She has grown to womanhood dreaming of an unknown lover, and now she has found him in Eugene. She is lost in reveries about him and absorbs herself again in novels, casting Eugene as the hero and herself as heroine.

The narrator comments how the heroes of novels once were consumed with a passion for the right and just, defeating vice and sin. Today, novels glorify vices, and vampires or egotists become heroes. The narrator thinks that perhaps he will write an old-fashioned tale of love and family life.

Meanwhile, the doomed Tatyana is obsessed with her love for Eugene. She cannot sleep and wakes her old nurse. She begs her nurse to tell her about the old days and asks if she was ever in love. Her nurse says that the world was different then, and her marriage was arranged by a marriage maker when the nurse was only thirteen. The nurse thinks Tatyana is ill, but Tatyana confesses that she's in love. Tatyana finally begs the nurse to leave her, and she sits down to write a letter.

The narrator comments on cold, calculating women who manipulate men, first frightening them away and then entrapping them again. Tatyana is natural and honest, giving in to her passions, without thought of manipulation or playing games. Tatyana does not calculate how she approaches her lover in order to trap him. Instead, she becomes caught up in her passions and lets them lead her.

The narrator now says that the reader will insist on a transcript of Tatyana's letter to Eugene. However, Tatyana does not know Russian well and instead writes her love letter in French. A woman's love, the narrator notes, cannot be expressed in Russian. There is a movement to teach women Russian, but the poet opposes it, saying that the most attractive women do not know Russian well and that poor Russian is charming. He is repelled by the thought of women well schooled in the Russian language and longs for women who insert French phrases into their poor Russian conversation.



The narrator begs for the poet who wrote "The Feasts" to come translate Tatyana's French letter into Russian in order to do her words justice. However, his friend is in Finland and cannot answer the narrator's call for assistance. The narrator reads Tatyana's letter over and over, aching inside each time because of her lovely surrender to her emotions. The narrator humbly offers his poor translation of her words.

Tatyana's letter says that she knows Eugene might reject her, but she also knows that he will pity her. She has tried to ignore her feelings, but each time she would see him or hear him speak, her feelings were kindled. Eugene, she knows, does not like the country and enjoys solitude, but Tatyana welcomes him. She bemoans that he ever came to see her, bringing on her unfulfilled passions. Perhaps she could have met another man and become a wife and mother, but now no one else can take his place in her heart. Tatyana reveals all her hopes and fantasies and love for Eugene, and she places her heart in his hands. She waits for his decision, to end her doubts either by accepting her or rejecting her.

Once the letter is written, Tatyana holds it in her hands in distress. The sun rises; morning breaks. Tatyana still pauses over the letter in torment, ignoring the dawn. Her nurse, Filatievna, comes in with morning tea and says that Tatyana looks better this morning. Tatyana begs Filatievna to have her grandson deliver the letter. Tatyana identifies the recipient only as "O", hardly daring to say Onegin's name, but the elderly nurse does not understand who she means. Tatyana finally says the letter is to Onegin, and the nurse takes the letter away.

The day passes, as Tatyana desperately awaits a reply, but none comes. Vladimir comes to visit Olga, and Tatyana asks about Eugene. Vladimir says that Eugene will come that day, but he's been delayed by the mail. Tatyana hangs her head, embarrassed. The evening comes, and the table is fully. Olga pours tea, and the cream is handed around by a servant. Meanwhile, Tatyana gazes out the window, tracing Eugene's initials in the condensation on the glass.

Tatyana hears a horse; Eugene is arriving. She runs down through the garden to wait for him, and she hears some peasant girls singing while picking berries. There is a rule that the girls must sing while picking fruit so that they won't eat what they're picking. The song describes the women attracting a young man with their song and then running off, throwing fruit at him, when he approaches. Tatyana waits anxiously, but Eugene does not come. Finally, she gives up and turns to head to the house, but as she turns, she runs into Eugene waiting in the night. The narrator says that he's too tired to tell what happens next, so it will have to wait.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Only through Vladimir's youthful passion does Eugene pass back into society and into the realm of possible love. Eugene is attracted, perhaps, by the vision in Vladimir of the passion that Eugene once felt and can feel no longer. That attraction leads Eugene back to the temptation of passion.



Eugene finds Tatyana more attractive than Vladimir's pretty, fluffy Olga, sensing that Tatyana has more depth than her sister. The narrator also throws his lot in with Tatyana, admiring her attractions. Eugene sees something in Tatyana that is beyond the superficiality against which he has rebelled, but he does not react to it. He is discontented with the artificial, but he cannot see the value of substance. This harkens back to Eugene's early studies, when he is easily bored with writers of substance like Homer. His inability to connect with substantial goodness (while he so easily sees through the valueless, superficial things) ultimately dooms Eugene.

Interestingly, the views of the Larins's neighbors drive Tatyana's feelings. Here again, social perceptions play a powerful role in events. Tatyana is attracted to Eugene, and her feelings seem to be fired by the neighbors' gossip that the two are engaged.

Still, Tatyana is lacking in the wiles of society. She is not a manipulator, and she is not superficial in any way. She rejects everything that has repelled Eugene about his meaningless world, and so she is honest and sincere, wearing her heart on her sleeve. Her letter reflects all of Tatyana's innermost feelings and passionate struggles. Her insecurities are as obvious as her love.

Tanya throws herself completely into her passion for Eugene. Her nurse represents conventional attitudes toward love. Love is hardly an essential, to her. She perceives Tatyana's despair as illness, something disruptive to life. The nurse herself never fell in love. Her marriage was arranged, and she was pulled from her family, in fear of what awaited her. Marriage, in this sense, is something necessary, a societal convention. Tatyana's view of marriage is personal and fulfills the individual's needs instead of fulfilling society's needs. Just as Tatyana rejects socialization in favor of being by herself and exploring her inner world, she rejects marriage as a social structure in favor of marriage as a personal achievement.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The narrator comments that a woman most easily falls for a man when he only pretends to love her. The art of seducing a woman, though, is outdated, and seduction without feeling is a dull thing. Eugene is tired of the drama of seduction, having spent eight years of his life in meaningless entanglements, leading nowhere. He lost his desire for women by pursuing them half-heartedly, always somewhat relieved when a fling ended, whether he was rejected or betrayed.

However, Eugene is moved by the sincerity of Tatyana's letter. He remembers favorably her pale skin and retiring, sorrowful manner. For a moment, he feels passion again, but he cannot mislead Tatyana or seduce her. When Eugene and Tatyana meet, Eugene tells her that he's read her letter and that he respects her feelings. He confesses that the letter stirred his emotions. Still, Eugene says that he does not want a wife or family. If he had, she would most certainly be his choice, even though his life is one of sorrow.

Eugene says that he is not deserving of Tatyana and not made for happiness. Marriage would destroy them both, and he would soon become bored with her, destroying his love. Then, she would be miserable, and he would be unfeeling. An unhappy household is the worst thing in life, and Eugene sees himself as acrimonious, selfish, possessive, and moody. This cannot be the life that she wants.

Eugene continues, telling her that his soul is ruined. Although he loves her, he must be like a brother to her. He says that she will soon recover from her feelings for him, since she is young. She'll fall in love again, but he tells her she must learn how to restrain her feelings so that men don't take advantage of her.

Tatyana listens to Eugene tearfully. He gives her his arm and walks her back through the garden to the house. Tatyana is stiff and morose. The narrator says that Eugene is certainly kind in his treatment of Tatyana, but the neighbors all condemn him for his actions. Eugene's friends are as bad as his enemies, berating him for turning down Tatyana. Friends, the narrator comments, are worse than enemies, always looking for ways to defame and denounce you while professing that you're like family.

Family, the narrator goes on, are simply people that we are obligated to love while visiting them once a year at Christmas, or at least sending a card. The rest of the time, our family can completely forget us. The love of a woman is more certain than either friends or family, and yet a woman's love is also apt to disappear. Who can we love and trust? Who will understand us and not bore us? The narrator's advice is to love yourself.

After being rejected by Eugene, Tatyana is distressed. She is ill, taking pleasure in nothing, and the neighbors say that she needs to get married. The narrator loves and sympathizes with Tatyana.



Meanwhile, Olga and Vladimir are deeply in love. They spend their time with each other, in Olga's room or walking through the grounds. He sometimes dares to touch her hair or kiss her dress, and he reads her novels, skipping over parts that he finds unsuitable for a young lady. They spend hours bent over the chessboard, and when he leaves her, he is still enraptured with her. He writes his poetry for her.

Country girls keep albums which their friends sign, usually horrible verses filled with misspellings and trite sketches. The poet is glad to sign such albums, which aren't subject to critical scrutiny. Whenever he's asked to sign one, he's sorely tempted to include some spiteful verse, but young women only want treacly sentiments.

Vladimir's comments in Olga's book are not conventional verses. He fills his poetry with sincere love. He writes of everything that strikes him about Olga, composing elegies to her. Critics call on poets to stop writing elegies and to write odes instead, reminiscent of the past. The ode, says this school of thought, has a higher purpose, while the elegy lacks any deeper meaning. The narrator disagrees, but refuses to take up this argument at the moment.

Vladimir is inspired by Olga and might have written odes, but Olga does not read such things. The poet rarely has such a treat as to read his poetry for the one who inspires him. The narrator contents himself to read to his elderly nurse or to a neighbor who happens to come to dinner. Perhaps, even, he reads to ducks, sending them off into the sky with his poetry. This, though, upsets the waiting hunter, who berates him for scaring off the ducks with his poems. Everyone, the narrator says, has his own passion, whether poetry, hunting, swatting at flies, ruling a country, war, ennui, or wine.

Meanwhile, Eugene spends his days in seclusion, wandering his grounds, swimming, riding, reading, eating, drinking, and perhaps embracing a young local girl. He ignores the local society, preferring his own company. The weather turns colder, and autumn arrives. The days are short, the trees lose their leaves. The geese head south for the winter, and November comes.

The fields are empty in the early morning. A traveler's horse shies at the scent of a hungry wolf. The shepherd no longer brings out the cows in the cold weather. A girl is singing in her shack, spinning thread in the cold night by firelight. The fields are frosted over, and the river is frozen, full of ice-skating boys. The first snows arrive. There is little to fill the days, since the scenery is dull, and it's too icy to ride. One can read, or drink and fall into a rage. Eventually, the winter will end.

Eugene stays in the house all day, playing billiards. Vladimir arrives for dinner, and the two drink a fine wine. The narrator comments that once, for such a wine, he spent his last penny. Such drink created many happy times, but now it just upsets his stomach. He finds a Bordeaux much safer.

The fire dies, and smoke rises from the glowing coals. Wine glasses are still on the table, and Eugene and Vladimir spend the evening in quiet conversation. Eugene asks about Tatyana and Olga, and Vladimir says that the family sends their well wishes. He



praises Olga's beauty and goodness and begs Eugene to visit them. He's been invited the following week for Tatyana's name-day observance on Saturday. Vladimir begs Eugene to accept. When Eugene objects that there will be a huge crowd, Vladimir says that it will just be the family, and finally Eugene agrees to go as a favor to Vladimir. Vladimir goes back to praising his love, Olga.

Vladimir and Olga's wedding is scheduled for two weeks, and Vladimir is floating on clouds waiting for it. He never imagines the dreary days of married life.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Eugene's reaction to Tatyana's letter is contrasted to his past experiences of "love". Eugene is a master of seduction, but seduction is all he knows about love. He does not have any conception that there is something beyond seduction that can exist between the sexes. He is moved by Tatyana's letter, but he cannot conceive of exchanging real and fulfilling feelings with another human being. He is too separated from his own feelings to respond. His only choices, Eugene feels, are to either seduce Tatyana or to reject her. He chooses to reject her, the better choice, but he completely misses the third possibility, to honestly respond to the feelings that her letter arouses.

Eugene can only picture becoming bored with Tatyana (or any woman) in his future life. He has become bored with everything that he's experienced in the past, every superficial aspect of life and every entertainment that people devise. He cannot perceive that there are things in life that are not superficial and that are enduring. He imagines that all passions fade, like Tatyana's mother's passion for her young lover. When he tells Tatyana that she will fall in love again, Eugene is telling Tatyana that her love is untrue, as he believes all love is.

Again, the narrator brings up the neighbors' gossip. People judge and condemn Eugene for his treatment of Tatyana, but their condemnation seems rooted in a superficial observation of the events. Tatyana is broken-hearted, and the neighbors shame Eugene for rejecting her. The narrator comments on how friends can be worse than enemies, telling people what they ought to do or should have done. In reality, no one except Eugene and Tatyana is intimate enough with their relationship to judge the rightness or wrongness of Eugene's behavior.

Olga and Vladimir's love seems perfect, but these two lovers may have only a superficial love, the kind that Eugene rejects. Vladimir is sentimental, and Olga is pretty. Their love affair is rooted more in youth than in constancy. Vladimir's obsession with her is, most likely, not an enduring passion. Throughout the novel, the reader does not see any depth in Olga, and Vladimir seems only attracted to her happy manner and pretty face.

Vladimir's other passion, besides Olga, is poetry, but Olga does not appreciate Vladimir's poetry, even though she's his inspiration. The narrator compares poetry to anyone else's hobbies and describes reading his poems to ducks. In other words, the



narrator downplays the importance of his own art, giving it no more importance, perhaps, than swatting at flies. This commentary seems ironic, since elsewhere the poet gives poetry a high place, describing it as a way to find spiritual meaning.

The changing of the seasons is an important indicator, not only of time passing but of the world moving on and evolving. As summer turns to autumn and autumn turns to winter, the world changes. The passing of time and change of the seasons is another cycle, like the cycle of life and death and the cycle of youth and age, where passions rise and fall. The narrator's changing taste in wine, which began with youthful invigoration and now has settled down to the enjoyment of a calm Bordeaux, is another reflection of this same cycle.

As the chapter ends, Vladimir convinces Eugene to come with him to Tatyana's name-day celebration. Eugene does not want to see Tatyana after their uncomfortable confrontation, and he does not want to be forced into the social situations that he so hates. Vladimir, however, convinces Eugene that the scene will not be a large party and that he must come see the family. Vladimir does not understand the undercurrents that are going on in Eugene's emotions. He only sees the superficial realities, like his love for the beautiful Olga.

Eugene believes that he completely understands Vladimir in his youthful enthusiasm and his romanticism. He sees Vladimir as naive but harmless. However, Vladimir does not imagine the disillusionment that Eugene endures. He does not realize that he's harming his friend by misleading him into attending an event that is more than uncomfortable, but actually painful, for Eugene.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Autumn lingers, until finally one night in the beginning of January the snow begins to fall. Tanya wakes early the next morning to see the ground covered in white. Winter is filled with lovely scenes: horse-drawn sleighs and children sledding. The narrator notes that perhaps the reader doesn't enjoy such winter scenes, and he refers to a poet who portrays the beauty of winter in his poetry. The narrator has no wish to compete with this poet.

Tatyana loves Russian winters, including the cold, snowy days and the Christmas traditions. Each year, according to tradition, the servants guess the futures of the two sisters, always predicting that both girls will marry soldiers and that there will be a war. Tatyana follows all the local superstitions, and everything to her is some kind of sign or portent. She wishes upon shooting stars and is afraid of ill omens such as startled hares or monks wearing black.

Tatyana watches wax melt into portentous shapes in water. In another ritual, rings of each person are picked out of a bowl of water, and Tatyana's is picked last, after they've sung a song about wealth and fame, but this combination predicts death. The girls all hope their rings will be drawn after the song that predicts marriage.

Tatyana goes out into the winter night and positions a mirror to reflect the moon. According to superstition, she should see her future husband, but she does not see anything but the moon's reflection. Then, she asks a passing stranger his name, another way to predict her husband, and he tells her "Agafon", a silly-sounding name. Tatyana's nurse tells her to stay up all night to conjure her love, but she gets too scared to follow through with it. She goes to sleep with a mirror beneath her pillow.

Tatyana dreams that she's walking in misty, snowy country. She comes upon a roaring river, with a dangerous-looking bridge across it. Tanya is afraid to cross, and there's no one to help her. Then, a bear appears, frightening her still more. He extends a paw, though, and she takes it, crossing the bridge with him. Once safe on the other side, she runs away, but the bear follows her.

As Tatyana runs through the woods, she is caught by branches and roots, losing her earrings, her shoe, and her kerchief. Finally, she falls to the ground. The bear picks her up and carries her to a small house and invites her in. Tatyana finds herself in a room. The bear is gone; she hears noises from the other room. Peeping through a doorway, she sees a group of monsters in celebration: a dog-headed monster with horns, a monster with a rooster head, a witch with a beard, a skeleton, a dwarf with a tail, a half-crane, half-cat, a crab riding a spider, a goose with a skull head, and a dancing windmill. In the midst of these creatures is Eugene Onegin, who seems to be their leader.



Wanting to see more, Tatyana leans farther through the door, but the monsters see her. Tatyana is terrified. All the monsters shout that Tatyana should be theirs, but Eugene says that she is his. The monsters run away, and Eugene lays her down on a bed and puts his head on her shoulders.

Olga comes into the room with Vladimir, and Eugene shouts at them to leave. The argument escalates, and Eugene stabs Vladimir with a knife. Tatyana wakes, and the sun is coming up. Olga comes in the room, asking Tatyana what she dreamed. Tatyana will not answer and instead searches for the meaning of the dream in a book.

The book about the meaning of dreams was brought to the family by a traveling bookseller, who left it when they purchased another book for some cash plus five other books. Soon, the dream book became Tatyana's favorite. Tatyana tries to find its meaning, but although elements of the dream are found in the book, like snow and bears, she does not find any real understanding.

Days pass, and Tatyana's name-day celebration comes. Tatyana's mother's friends arrive, as well as all the Larins's neighbors, a motley group. A witty Frenchman brings Tanya a song, in which he's substituted her name for "Nina". The company commander joins them, a most eligible bachelor, to the delight of the girls and their mothers. It is time for dinner, and the company shuffles into the dining room.

Talking stops as the guests concentrate on their food, but conversation picks up again after everyone's had a few bites. The group is joyously chattering when Vladimir and Eugene appear, and Tatyana's mother welcomes the latecomers. The guests make room at the table, and Eugene and Vladimir are seated across from Tatyana. Tatyana can barely look at them in her confusion and embarrassment. Eugene is annoyed that his friend dragged him to such a gathering and angry at Tatyana's embarrassment. He swears to himself to take revenge on Vladimir.

Everyone but Eugene is too caught up in the food and wine to notice Tatyana. The Frenchman sings his song to Tatyana, and she politely bows to him as everyone cheers, though she's almost collapsing with emotion. Everyone congratulates Tatyana, and Eugene is sorry for her obvious distress, giving her a tender look that reawakens her love for him.

The guests play cards and then have tea. Then, the band starts up and the dancing begins. The poet recalls that when describing a ball in the early part of the poem, he went off on a tangent about women's feet. Now he recalls himself and promises not to go off on a tangent.

Eugene, to get back at Vladimir, goes up to Olga and begins chatting with her. He dances one song with her and then stays by her side. In a few minutes, they are on the dance floor again for their second dance in a row. Vladimir can't believe how he's being shunned. He is furiously jealous. The mazurka plays, and Eugene dances with Olga yet again. Vladimir waits until the end of the dance to ask Olga for his dance, but she



rejects him, saying she's promised Eugene yet another dance. Vladimir begins to believe that Olga's a fickle flirt. He rides off, thinking a duel is the answer to his problem.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Tatyana's superstitious nature is highlighted in this chapter, and this serves to contrast her with Eugene. Unlike Eugene, who finds meaning nowhere, Tatyana finds meaning in everything. She sees good omens or ill omens in every aspect of the natural environment. Tatyana's love of nature also contrasts her with Eugene. One with her superstition is her love of winter, which Eugene hates.

While Vladimir serves as one type of literary foil for Eugene, representing the exuberant but fleeting youthful passion that Eugene sees now as meaningless, Tatyana serves as a different type of literary foil for Eugene. She is his opposite, but her passion is not merely a fleeting, youthful whim. Tatyana looks inward to herself instead of outward to society. She sees something meaningful in Eugene instead of merely seeing something attractive. She looks to the natural world for meaning, while Eugene looks to his books (humanity instead of nature) and finds them ultimately empty.

Tatyana's dream is a portent of the future. The wintery landscape reflects how alone Tatyana really is. The bear who leads her across the river represents Eugene, a fierce and dangerous creature who initiates her into the world of love. The party of monsters that Tatyana spies is a precursor of her name-day celebration. Dame Larin's guests, the motley neighbors with their ridiculous natures, are akin to the monsters. Eugene, though seeming human, is chief among the monsters. He is, essentially and at his core, a being of society. Although he's rebelled against the superficiality, he cannot let go of the values of culture, so he appears as a human leading the monsters.

When Eugene takes Tatyana, it does not portend that they will be united. Instead, Tatyana has been captured by Eugene through her love for him. He does not want her, but he possesses her nonetheless. The intrusion of Olga and Vladimir on Tatyana and Eugene's relationship and Vladimir's death in a struggle with Eugene predicts what will soon happen: Vladimir's death at Eugene's hand.

The name-day celebration for Tatyana portrays the neighbors as a ludicrous group of empty, humorous people. Tatyana's poem on a day that celebrates her name is one adapted from a different name, superficially altered, not really for her benefit, but for the Frenchman to gain praise. This is another example of the artificiality of society.

The rollicking celebration has nothing to do with Tatyana, in actuality. Her name-day is more of an excuse for festivity than a meaningful honoring of Tatyana herself. No one notices Tatyana when she is clearly in distress at Eugene's arrival. Only Eugene, who is hardened to the type of party going on around him, notices Tatyana herself. As an individual, she is lost among the society. Since it is a celebration, everyone assumes that Tatyana is celebrating. Vladimir seems to make the same false conclusion about Eugene, never noticing his discomfort, which will lead to such disastrous results.



When Eugene takes revenge on Vladimir for bringing him to the celebration, he is unknowingly setting into motion deadly events. Vladimir does not have real empathy for Eugene and so does not realize that he's harming Eugene by bringing him to the party. Similarly, Eugene does not have real empathy for Vladimir. He does not take love or passion seriously. To Eugene, love and passion are always superficial things. That's why Eugene can treat Vladimir's love so lightly.

Olga herself is just as easily swayed as any woman Eugene has seduced in the past, and she is easy prey for Eugene's skills. Her behavior at Eugene's attention foreshadows her reaction to Vladimir's death and highlights the contrast between Olga and her sister Tatyana.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

After Vladimir leaves, Eugene loses all interest in his game. Olga, too, becomes bored and looks around for Vladimir. Finally, the evening's done, and the guests go to makeshift beds throughout the house. Olga and Tatyana's rooms are filled with girls. Tatyana, though, cannot sleep, and sits by the window. She is confused by Eugene's performance and thinks that death will be a relief from her unrequited love.

Meanwhile, Zaretsky, one of Vladimir Lensky's neighbors, is a mischief-maker and joker. In the future, he will settle down as a peaceful father and landowner, but now he is always up to trouble, playing tricks on people and making his neighbors look foolish. Only occasionally is he caught out and made to pay for his mean-spirited pranks. One of his hobbies is stirring up trouble between friends.

Since Zaretsky is an intelligent fellow, Eugene occasionally spends time with him, so he's not surprised to see Zaretsky come to his house the day after the ball. However, Zaretsky is not there to chat. He gives Eugene a note from Vladimir, challenging him to a duel. Eugene briefly accepts the challenge, and Zaretsky leaves. Once alone, Eugene is displeased with himself. He has made light of Vladimir's love for Olga, and in reality, Eugene loves Vladimir and doesn't want to hurt him. He thinks, though, that it's too late to change the course of events. He's concerned about what Zaretsky will do if he does not follow through with the duel and what public opinion will be.

Zaretsky returns to Vladimir, who has been anxiously awaiting news. He's pleased that the duel is on and that he'll have revenge on Eugene. Vladimir promises himself that he won't see Olga before the duel, thinking that she is inconstant and deceitful, but he cannot keep himself away. When he goes to Olga's house, she greets him joyously, as if nothing has happened.

Olga asks Vladimir why he left the ball, and Vladimir does not know how to reply. All his jealousy deserts him as he realizes that Olga still loves him. He can't bear to tell her what he's been thinking and instead thinks that only Eugene is to blame and that he'll deal with Eugene at the duel.

Vladimir does not realize the torment that Tatyana is going through, and Tatyana has no idea that the two friends will soon be embroiled in a deadly duel. Only Tatyana's old nurse might have guessed her feelings, but she is too slow to realize what's going on. Vladimir is moody all evening. When he finally bids Olga goodbye, she knows something is wrong, but he tells her it's nothing. That night, Vladimir checks his pistols in readiness for the duel. He cannot read, obsessed with thoughts of Olga, and he sits down to compose poems about her.



The narrator says that he happens to have Vladimir's poems, and he reprints them. In his verse, Vladimir calls out for the spring days, which are gone. Now fate is in charge, and perhaps the next day he'll be gone. Still, he calls out to his beloved. The narrator calls the poem limp and obscure. As the morning dawns, Vladimir finally drops off to sleep, but Zaretsky comes and wakes him at six o'clock. It's time for the duel.

Meanwhile, Eugene is still asleep. He only awakes late in the morning, and then he realizes that he is late for the duel. He rings his valet and hurries to dress. Gathering his pistols, Eugene takes off for the dueling spot. Eugene arrives late and finds Vladimir and Zaretsky waiting for him. Zaretsky, a connoisseur of traditional dueling, asks impatiently where Eugene's second is. Eugene introduces his French valet, Guillot, as his second.

The two former friends are now mired in enmity. The guns are loaded. The duelists take off their cloaks. Zaretsky measures thirty paces and leads each duelist to his place. The duel begins. Eugene and Vladimir walk toward each other, and Eugene lifts his gun. Vladimir takes aim, and then Eugene shoots. Vladimir clutches his chest and falls to the ground. Eugene runs to him, calling his name, but Vladimir is dead. Eugene is horrified, overcome with regret.

Zaretsky comments that Vladimir is dead. Eugene goes off and leaves Zaretsky to collect the corpse and drive it home. Vladimir was just a youth, and now all of his promise is left unfulfilled. Perhaps Vladimir would never have achieved greatness but merely settled down as a boring husband, eventually dying an old man. Still, he was a young dreamer and lover, and now he's been killed at his friend's hand.

Occasionally a girl will wander up to the mill and read the inscription about the duel. She will wonder what happened to Olga, Eugene, and Tatyana, and the poet promises to answer these questions. However, the poet is not ready to go on just yet. His desire to write has vanished, and he mourns the passing of his youth, which he thanks for its pleasures.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Eugene's flirtation with Olga has no substance. Both are superficial people, and their attraction is completely superficial. Without any impetus maintaining Eugene's behavior, their interest in each other dissolves. For Eugene, it was a means to an end. For Olga, it was an entertainment and a distraction. Tatyana, unschooled in meaningless flings, does not know what to make of it.

Zaretsky is a new character introduced in this chapter. He is a troublemaker, and he fans the flames of disagreement between Vladimir and Eugene. Perhaps if it weren't for Zaretsky, Vladimir would have cooled down instead of insisting on a duel. However, Zaretsky likes to toy with people's lives and emotions. Like Eugene, he is a manipulator and a game-player. He experiences no consequences to his actions, and Pushkin makes a point of mentioning that Zaretsky settles down as a lord and father into a



happy old age. Although he plays a game of life and death, he does not see any personal consequences.

When Eugene accepts the duel, he instantly has second thoughts. He thinks that he could have smoothed over Eugene's hurt feelings. Eugene, however, has a weakness: the eyes of society that are constantly upon him. He thinks, not about the pain of losing his friend or his life, but about what society will think of him if he backs out of his duel, and especially of Zaretsky's barbs at his behavior if he backs out. The constant critical glare of society is, in part, responsible for Vladimir's death.

Vladimir feels slighted and abused not only by Eugene but also by Olga. When he goes to see her, though, she does not act any differently, merely asking why he left so early. Vladimir does not truly understand Olga, who is a superficial person, and Olga has no empathy for Vladimir, who has a depth of poetic feeling that she cannot understand. Ultimately, there is no true communication between Olga and Vladimir, and this is accentuated by Vladimir's refusal to tell Olga about the duel.

Pushkin criticizes romantic poetry by reprinting Vladimir's final love poems and then bashing them as limp and obscure, saying if that's romantic, then no one wants to know. Vladimir is insipid in his youthful love for an equally insipid beauty, and his poetry has no more depth than his love affair. Pushkin and Eugene both seem to be seeking a deeper meaning.

Eugene does not take the duel seriously. He oversleeps, and he introduces his valet as his "second". Even as the two men are facing each other, guns raised, Eugene does not seem to see the real meaning behind the duel. To Eugene, the duel, like everything else, only exists superficially. He does not realize that there is truth and deeper meaning in the world. Only when Vladimir falls dead does Eugene realize that his actions have real consequences.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Spring finally arrives. The narrator finds the springtime a sad reminder of past passions and lost youth. Spring, though, is the time for everyone to go to the country, and the narrator calls on the reader to come to the country, where Eugene and Tatyana resided. Eugene is now gone, but there, in the country, below two pine trees, is Vladimir Lensky's grave.

Once, a wreath hung above Vladimir's grave, and sometimes two women would bring flowers and cry at the gravesite. Now, Vladimir's grave marker is alone and forgotten, with weeds growing around it with only a shepherd, singing and weaving shoes, to keep it company. Although Olga mourned Vladimir, she soon recovered. She fell in love with and married a lancer, a soldier. Does Vladimir, in his grave, know his love has betrayed him? Or is he lost in the sleep of death? The narrator says that there is no existence after death, and the dead are spared seeing the living battling over the dead one's possessions.

When the lancer must go back to his unit, Olga must leave her family. Her mother weeps, and her sister is overcome with sorrow. She is left alone, without her beloved sister. In her loneliness, Tatyana longs for Eugene, although she also hates him for killing Vladimir.

One evening, Tatyana takes a long walk and finds herself on a hill overlooking Eugene's estate. Although he is gone, she goes down to the house and is greeted by the peasants who live there. She asks to see the house and Anisya, who has the key, takes her on a tour of Eugene's former home, where she sees a pool cue left carelessly on a table, his riding crop cast off on a sofa, and other reminders of Eugene's life in the country estate. Anisya tells Tatyana how Eugene spent his days in the house and about his friendship with Vladimir. Tatyana treasures every intimation of Eugene.

Time passes, and it grows late. Tatyana must hurry home, but she gets Anisya's permission to come again and read Eugene's books in privacy. The next day, she returns, and in Eugene's books, Tatyana begins to understand her beloved. She can see what passages particularly moved him and reads his notes in the margins. Tatyana loses track of time as she sifts through these clues to Eugene's character.

Meanwhile, at Tatyana's home, two old friends are talking with Tatyana's mother about her. Tatyana's mother laments Tatyana's situation. She turns down all the men who approach her and spends her time moodily walking through the woods. They wonder if Tatyana is in love and talk about the men she's turned down. One of the friends recommends that Tatyana's mother take her to Moscow to find a husband. Dame Larin objects that she does not have enough money, but the friend says that she has enough for one winter. If she needs money, the friend offers to lend it.



Dame Larin is glad to have this advice and decides that she can afford a winter in Moscow. Tatyana is not pleased to learn of the planned trip, anticipating the critical eyes of Moscow society examining her. The next day she wakes early and runs out into the country, saying goodbye to everything she knows and loves. She spends the summer savoring the nature that she adores before she must leave for Moscow.

Winter comes again, blanketing the world with snow, but Tatyana is not entranced by its arrival. The day of the trip finally arrives, and the carriages are laden with everything that Tatyana and her mother will need, including furniture, food, pots and pans, chickens, and almost everything they own. Eighteen horses pull the carriages, and finally, Tatyana and her mother depart. Tatyana is filled with grief.

The narrator guesses that in about five hundred years all the roads in Russia will be paved, with inns along the way and iron bridges crossing the rivers, but now the roads are bad and the bridges are falling down. Still, the winter drive is not bad. Unfortunately, Dame Larin has not invested in better horses, and the trip to Moscow takes seven days.

Finally, Tatyana and her mother see Moscow in the distance. The narrator comments on how wonderful it is for a traveler to see Moscow's domes and crosses in the distance. Not long ago, Napoleon waited here for Russia's surrender, but instead he was defeated by fire throughout the city. Tatyana and Dame Larin ride through the city for two hours and then arrive at Dame Larin's cousin's house. Dame Larin's cousin has consumption, and Tatyana and her mother go to her bed to greet her. The long-separated cousins exclaim how wonderful it is to be reunited. Dame Larin's cousin tells Tatyana's mother that her once beloved Grandson is in Moscow and that his son has recently married. Dame Larin barely remembers him.

Dame Larin and her cousin plan to introduce Tatyana to society, but now it's time to rest after the long journey. The cousin, too, is tired from her illness. Tatyana likes her aunt, but she's uncomfortable in this new and strange place. She cannot sleep. Every day, she is brought to a dinner with a new family member, and all her relatives fawn over her, remembering her when she was a baby and commenting on how she's grown.

The relatives, however, never change. Aunt Elena still wears the same hat and Lukerya Lvovna is still powdered. Lyubov Petrovna is still a liar, and Ivan Petrovich is still slow. Semyon Petrovich is still a drunk, and Anna Pavlovna still has the same French friend, husband, and dog. The daughters of all the relatives take charge of Tatyana, and overall, their judgment of her is good. However, she needs polishing, and they proceed to do her hair and dress her, meanwhile gossiping about their love lives. Tatyana, however, will not talk of her deepest feelings in this way.

Men are attractive to Tatyana, but they do not appeal to her. Tatyana attends the theater and a club for noblemen, where unmarried women seek mates among the harsh light, loud music, and dancing crowds. Tatyana hates Moscow society and misses the peaceful countryside. Meanwhile, always seeking a husband for her, her aunts notice a general eyeing Tatyana.



Chapter 7 Analysis

The changing of the seasons marks the beginning of this chapter as well, and the narrator makes the connection between spring and youth, finding springtime touched with sorrow and loss. Vladimir Lensky's grave is the image that the poet connects with springtime, and Vladimir himself represents youth. His death represents the end of passion and the passage of youth. Vladimir can never grow older, and he can never lose the youthful passion that caused his death.

Olga is proven superficial and inconstant, since her grief at Vladimir's death hardly lasts at all. She does exactly what Eugene expects that Tatyana might do after his rejection of her. Olga finds another man, falls in love again, and marries. Her love was not truly deep or meaningful, and so she merely passes on to the next infatuation.

Tatyana, however, does not merely pass on to another love. Even after Eugene kills Vladimir and leaves his country estate, Tatyana does not let him go. Instead, her love for him seems to deepen and become more substantial, as she gets to know him through his notations in the margins of books. Tatyana has something that Olga can never have: a deep, sincere, and undying affection for a man.

Tatyana's mother represents the expectations of society. Tatyana, in order to fit into society, must marry. She is not concerned about Tatyana's feelings or her love. In fact, Tatyana's mother does not remember her own girlhood sorrow at being forced to marry a man that she did not love. She easily enough forgot him, like her inconstant daughter Olga, and she believes that Tatyana will settle down into wifedom much as she did herself.

The poet paints a patriotic and loving portrait of Moscow, arising up at the end of a long and tiring journey. At the same time, Pushkin points out the poor roads and bridges that make travel difficult throughout Russia (estimating that it will take five hundred years to fix the problem). In this way, in one scene he is giving veiled criticisms of Russia, while in the next scene, he is praising his native land.

Pushkin's portrait of Moscow society is hardly as full of praise as his portrait of approaching the city. Tatyana is shunted from event to event, where women hunt for husbands as if they were stalking prey. Tatyana is eyed by men and must put up with unwanted attention. The women make light of their love affairs and play the game of society that Eugene is so disillusioned with. In Moscow, love is a matter of social matchmaking and catching fish more than it is a matter of the heart.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

The narrator talks about the days of his youth. When his poetry first blossoms, the Muse is his companion, and he displays her to everyone in society with pride. The poet and his Muse soon leave the social scene, but the Muse still lights the way for the poet, illuminating the country people and finally a young girl, in love, reading a romance. Now, the poet shows his Muse a grand ball full of noble people. Among the guests there is a stranger. Is it Eugene? Has he changed?

Is the harsh criticism of Eugene based on people's constant desire to condemn? Is it based on stupidity and pettiness? A lucky man is loving in youth and marries at the right time, growing wealthy and respected as he gets older. Then, all his life, those around him will praise him.

Youth, though, is destined to be destroyed, and all youthful hopes and passions die as time goes on. It is difficult to resist the perceptions and prodding of the crowd and societal opinion. Eugene, after killing his friend, finds no reason or purpose in life. Restless, he leaves his country home and travels abroad. However, a life of travel soon becomes boring to Eugene, too, and he returns to Moscow.

Eugene is at a ball, when across the room, a self-possessed woman walks through the crowd. She exudes confidence, and both women and men surround her and honor her presence. She is a vision of elegance. Eugene sees her and thinks he recognizes her, but he cannot believe it's her, a simple country girl reborn into this vision. He watches her, and then he asks a prince who she is. The prince responds that the woman is his wife.

Eugene did not know the prince was married and asks about his marriage. Two years ago, he married Tatyana Larin. Eugene says that they were neighbors in the country, and the prince takes Eugene to meet his wife. Tatyana shows no hint of emotion when she meets him. Eugene can barely speak, but Tatyana makes a little small talk and then moves on, leaving him in shock. Eugene still has the young girl's passionate letter; is this cold, confident woman the same girl?

Eugene goes home, but his thoughts are uneasy. He cannot sleep. The next day, Prince N. sends him an invitation, and Eugene accepts, glad of the chance to see Tatyana again. He's overcome with a desire to see her and counts down the time until his visit. Finally, he races to the house, and he finds Tatyana (now a princess) alone. Eugene's social grace and confidence deserts him in front of her, and he can't find any words to say. Tatyana, however, is perfectly composed. Finally, her husband comes, and Eugene makes conversation with this friend of his youth.



Guests arrive, and the party begins. Everyone is from the highest society, and the highbrow, intellectual conversation is anything but vulgar. Despite the prodigious guests, Eugene only pays attention to Tatyana, who is so changed from her younger self. She is cold and distant instead of overtaken by passion. Now, Eugene wants what he cannot have. The tables have turned, and Eugene torments himself with visions of love. He hovers around her, attentive to her every whim or need. Tatyana, however, pays him no attention whatsoever, and Eugene falls sick with his unrequited love. Unwilling to give up his passions, Eugene writes Tatyana a letter.

In Eugene's letter, he says that he knows Tatyana will not want to hear his confessions and that she will scorn him. When he first met her, he was soured on love and could not trust it. Then, after Vladimir's death, Eugene left, separating him from Tatyana. He realizes now that he's alone and has no comfort. He confesses his love for her and how he desires only to see her face and hear her voice. He is afraid that she will read his letter and think that he's trying to seduce her, but he assures her that he's overcome with the pain of love. Eugene surrenders his fate to his beloved Tatyana.

Eugene receives no answer to his letter, and he writes again and again. When he meets Tatyana at a gathering, she doesn't even speak to him. She displays only anger. Eugene leaves, destroyed. He retires to solitude again, locked in depression. He turns to books again, as well, but he cannot concentrate on reading because his emotions are so raw. He reviews his life, and he sees in his mind Vladimir, dead so young. Then he sees the young Tatyana, waiting at her window for him. Eugene nearly goes mad in his sorrow. He is even in danger of becoming a poet.

Winter passes, and Eugene keeps both his life and his mind, avoiding turning to poetry. In spring, he begins to recover, and finally he leaves his house to ride by the river, toward Tatyana's house. He finds her sitting alone, in tears, reading a letter. She is not the cold princess, but the young and impassioned Tatyana, and Eugene falls to his knees before her. He kisses her hands. Finally, she pushes him away. She says that she owes him an explanation and reminds him of his response to her love letter, so long ago.

Tatyana tells Eugene that when she was younger and prettier, she loved him, but he rejected her, bored with a simple girl's passions. She is grateful for his honesty then, but why is he pursuing her now, when her love meant nothing to him? Perhaps her new high rank in society and prominent husband make her desirable, or a high target to be felled and made a laughingstock in society. She finds her high life empty and meaningless. She misses her home in the country and her books. She could have had happiness, but now she knows her fate is this life of prominence. Her mother finally wore her down to accept marriage. She loves Eugene, but she is married to another. She tells him that he must leave, and then she goes out of the room.

Eugene is distressed and stands in the empty room. Tatyana's husband comes in, and the narrator says that it's time to leave Eugene. He hopes the reader is satisfied with the story and that it's given the reader whatever respite he or she desired. He says goodbye to his reader and to his characters, Tatyana and poor Eugene.



Chapter 8 Analysis

In the beginning of the final chapter, the narrator talks about the development of his poetic muse. The muse is his poetry. In the wild, uneasy times of youth, the poet makes his muse a social tool, for his own glorification in society. He is living, through his poetry, for the social scene, much as Eugene Onegin lives through his sexual escapades for the social scene. As Eugene's story tells us, this is an empty endeavor.

The poet's muse, however, outlasts the fleeting joys of society. When the poet leaves the balls and gatherings, he finds inspiration among all types of people, and he finds Tatyana in his country garden. Tatyana represents the truth behind the fleeting fancies of youthful love. In fact, she represents deeper feeling and human connection. Tatyana is the inner reality behind the masks of society, and the poet's muse, much like Tatyana, represents something steadfast and constant. Art and poetry need not be fleeting and fanciful, but can have real and lasting meaning.

Although poetry and love can have lasting meaning, youth cannot last. The problem is confusing love with youthful passions or indiscretions. The question the poet asks is, once youth passes, what remains? The societal role of matriarch remains for Tatyana's mother, but what is its value? It condemns Dame Larin's daughter to her mother's fate of a loveless marriage. For Vladimir, only death remains after youth. For Eugene, he finds nothing after youth is passed. He finds everything in life meaningless. The poet seems to prod the reader to seek out what is meaningful in life, beyond the bloom of youth's passion, and hold on to that meaning.

In this chapter, Eugene finds his role reversed from his previous one. He is no longer the one who scorns the love-sick admirer. Instead, he becomes love-sick and hopeless in his attraction to Tatyana. What attracts Eugene to Tatyana? She goes from being an honest, sincere, open country girl to being a completely reserved social creature navigating high society. Is it Eugene's nature as a social creature himself who has, so often, manipulated social games that attracts him to Tatyana now? Has Eugene, on some level, come to realize, through the pain of killing and therefore losing his friend Vladimir, that real meaning exists below the surface of superficial relationships?

Certainly, Tatyana now is a contrast of the superficial and the actual. She exists in a world that denies her inner self. As the wife of a prince, she is self-controlled and self-contained at all times. She must completely repress her emotions. The natural and open country girl has been covered up by a social mask so successful that even Eugene, master manipulator, cannot see through it.

Eugene's letter to Tatyana echoes Tatyana's love letter to Eugene earlier in the story, and their final interview, when Tatyana rejects Eugene for noble reasons, echoes their earlier interview when Eugene rejects Tatyana for noble reasons. The roles of the lovers are completely reversed. If Eugene had realized a need for love much earlier, they could both have been happy, but Eugene has lived his life believing that everything is meaningless. His obsession with the superficial and simultaneous dissatisfaction with the superficial has led to unhappiness for both Eugene and Tatyana.



Characters

Eugene Onegin

Eugene Onegin is a creature of society. In his youth, Eugene is admired for his social graces, despite having no real depth to his education. Eugene masters the art of seducing women, which he practices without any real feeling or emotion. He is caught up in passion and believes that it is "love." He sees how fickle human emotions are. Soon, though, Eugene tires of this completely superficial life.

Eugene, while disillusioned with the artificiality inherent in high society, cannot see anything meaningful and natural beneath the external artifices. He falls into depression because he is disconnected from reality. The only world he knows is the unnatural world of society and social graces. He cannot connect with the natural world or the realities of the human condition.

Eugene's inability to see real meaning below the superficial existence of human beings is represented by Eugene's distaste for the country and country life. He cannot appreciate things that are not created by society, and yet he distains everything that is without substance. This leaves Eugene with nothing. He cannot appreciate Tatyana because he does not realize that Tatyana is a true and raw human being with lasting emotions. He ignores not only Tatyana's emotions, but his friend Vladimir's emotions, leading Vladimir to challenge Eugene to a duel.

Eugene's rejection of the natural and substantive human condition leads him to reject the idea that his friendship with and love for Vladimir is more important than following through with the social compact of the duel. Eugene kills his friend, and only afterwards does he realize and regret his actions. Only at this late date does Eugene realize that he had real emotions for Vladimir, and he makes a similar mistake with Tatyana.

When Eugene finally falls in love with Tatyana, she has taken on the outward appearances of high society. She is married to a prince, and she has learned to conceal her emotions. She walks through social functions in command of the situation. Eugene knows that Tatyana has a depth of human emotion because he's seen it, and he falls in love with her now that she also has a societally acceptable exterior.

Tatyana Larin

Tatyana is a young country girl. She is introverted, preferring the solitude of country walks and romantic novels to the usual entertainments of more superficial young girls. In contrast to her outgoing sister Olga, Tatyana spends her time with herself.

Tatyana enjoys nature and feels things deeply. She falls in love with Eugene Onegin when he comes over for a visit, and she becomes consumed with her own passion. Because Tatyana spends most of her time with herself, in internal meditation, she



knows herself well. This self-knowledge allows her to develop a real and lasting love, even though she has only met Eugene once. Tatyana's self-awareness also gives her some ability to identify with natural signals and signs. She is superstitious, looking for omens everywhere, and she has a premonition in a dream that Eugene will kill Vladimir.

When Tatyana is rejected by Eugene, he believes that she will quickly recover and fall in love with someone else, but Tatyana is not interested in other loves. She has thrown her lot in with Eugene, for better or worse, even if it means a life alone. Her goal is not simply to be married and have children, like many girls. Instead, Tatyana wants to be true to herself.

While Eugene is away, Tatyana spends her time going through Eugene's books, and she comes to know him better from the notes that he makes in the margins. Her love for him grows, and it is not superficial but instead based on her knowledge of his inner thoughts and beliefs. Tatyana is pressed into a loveless marriage by her mother, and she learns to take on the masks of society. When Eugene finally falls in love with her, Tatyana is committed to her marriage. Although she loves Eugene, her nature is to be true and constant, and she cannot betray her husband.

The Narrator/Poet

The narrator interrupts the poem periodically to give a first-person point of view about events or issues. In this way, Pushkin himself takes on a persona as storyteller in his novel about Eugene Onegin. The narrator comments on his lost youth, on living high society life, on friends and fellow poets, on poetry itself and his poetic muse, on the Russian language, and on women (and their beautiful feet). The poet relates his own life and experiences to the experiences of the characters. In many ways, the poet is like Eugene Onegin, a creature of Moscow society, but the poet also sees meaning beneath the superficiality of human relationships, a meaning that he seeks to express through his poetic muse.

Vladimir Lensky

Vladimir Lensky is a young poet and a romantic. His tastes in love are superficial at best, and he falls in love with Olga because of her outward charms. Vladimir's poetry is as sappy as his love affair. Eugene looks down on Vladimir's passions with an indulgence for flighty youth, not taking Vladimir's feelings seriously. This turns out to be a fatal mistake, since when Eugene monopolizes Olga at Tatyana's name-day celebration dance, Vladimir's heart is broken. Vladimir challenges his friend to a duel, and as a result, Eugene shoots his friend dead. Vladimir is cut down in the prime of life, never to lose his youthful vigor.



Olga Larin

Olga Larin is Tatyana's beautiful and happy sister. Olga's beauty is so traditional as to be trite, and she lacks Tatyana's depth. Olga is a fickle lover, and although she falls head over heels for Vladimir, she is easily swayed by Eugene's attention at Tatyana's name-day ball. After Vladimir's death, Olga quickly recovers from her sorrow and marries a lancer.

Dame Larin

Dame Larin is Olga and Tatyana's mother. As a young girl, she is in love with a young rogue, but her family marries her off against her will to Tatyana and Olga's father. Over time, Dame Larin becomes caught up in her life as a wife and mother, and she forgets about her one-time love. Dame Larin eventually berates Tatyana into a loveless marriage.

Eugene's Uncle

Eugene's uncle dies, leaving Eugene a country estate.

Filatievna

Filatievna is Tatyana's elderly nurse. Tatyana confides in her, but the nurse believes Tatyana is ill instead of in love.

Zaretsky

Zaretsky is one of Vladimir Lensky's neighbors. He is a troublemaker, playing pranks and playing games with others' feelings. Zaretsky goads Vladimir and makes sure that he follows through with the duel with Eugene.

The Lancer

Olga falls in love with and marries an unnamed lancer after Vladimir's death.

Anisya

Anisya is the peasant woman who has the keys to Eugene's country home after he leaves. She lets Tatyana in to read Eugene's books.



Dame Larin's Cousin/Tatyana's Aunt

When Dame Larin takes Tatyana to Moscow, they stay with Dame Larin's cousin, Tatyana's aunt, who is ill with consumption.

Prince N.

Tatyana eventually weds Prince N., not because she wants to but because her mother insists that she choose a husband.



Objects/Places

Onegin's Estate

Eugene Onegin inherits his country estate from a wealthy uncle. While at his estate, he meets Vladimir Lensky and Tatyana Larin, the two people who will determine his fate.

Onegin's Books

Tatyana learns about Eugene from reading the notations in his books.

The Mill

Vladimir Lensky challenges Eugene to a duel at the mill, where Eugene finally shoots and kills his friend.

Vladimir Lensky's Grave

Vladimir Lensky is buried beneath two pine trees. Although Olga originally mourns him there, eventually his grave is deserted.

Moscow

Moscow is the center of Russian society and culture. Eugene becomes disillusioned with society's games while in Moscow, and when Tatyana comes to Moscow, it is because her mother is trying to find her a husband at Moscow's "marriage market". Tatyana eventually is absorbed into a high place in Moscow's society, not because she desires it, but because her mother bothers her and bothers her until she chooses a husband.

Tatyana's Love Letter

When Tatyana falls in love with Eugene, she sends him a frank and passionate letter confessing her love.

Eugene's Love Letter

When Eugene meets Tatyana after she has wedded the prince, he sends her a love letter confessing his newfound passion for her. Tatyana does not respond, and Eugene assumes she is angry. Actually, Tatyana is deeply hurt because, although she still loves Eugene, she cannot betray her husband.



The Larins's Estate

The Larins hold social gatherings at their country estate, and they are neighbors of Eugene Onegin.

The Muse

The narrator describes his poetic muse as a woman through whom he views the world.

Vladimir's Poem

Vladimir writes trite love poetry idolizing his beautiful Olga, and on the eve of the duel, Vladimir writes a poem anticipating his death, a poem that the narrator ridicules for being hackneyed.



Themes

Society and Superficiality

Eugene is a creature of society, and all of his skills are designed to manipulate social situations. His particular art is the art of seducing women. He seems completely separated from natural human emotions and the natural human condition. He is caught up in all of the artificiality of society. However, society is essentially superficial. Social gatherings only deal with what is on the surface for everyone to see: outward beauty. The theater, which Eugene loves, is the epitome of this superficiality, a show of outward appearances for the enjoyment of others.

Superficiality is inherently unsatisfying. That is why all the games of youth seem to fade and pass away as people get older. No one can live a superficial life throughout their years. As all the characters grow older, passions, games, and social amusements lose their attractions. For Eugene, this disillusionment occurs quickly and severely. However, Eugene has not learned any underlying realities of nature beyond the social graces and social games that he's such a master of. Once society's inherently artificial nature is revealed to him, he has nothing real to put in its place and to give his life fulfillment. Eugene loses all interest in life and love.

The author's message seems to be that superficial things cannot last and that one must find real and meaningful things to take their place. Tatyana comes to Eugene with real and meaningful emotions, but he cannot recognize her and confuses her feelings with the false faces of society. Vladimir comes to Eugene with real and meaningful friendship, but he cannot recognize Vladimir's value and allows himself to be caught up in a duel that leads to his friend's death. Ultimately, Eugene's tragedy is his inability to see the reality beneath the superficial guises of society.

Love and Passion

Pushkin's story is the story of two sets of lovers, so love plays a prominent role in the story. However, most love is not truly love, but rather passion. Passion is fleeting and brief, and Eugene Onegin has seen much passion in his time in Moscow. He confuses love with passion, not believing that there is any depth beyond the superficial feelings of attraction.

For the most part, Eugene is right. Passions fade, and most people are fickle. Olga proves herself to be a fickle lover, even though Vladimir dies for her. Vladimir's love centers around Olga's trite prettiness and seems to have no depth. Eugene sees the outward cycle of love. Lovers are attracted. They either unite or separate. There are tears, or there is indifference. It is the same old story over and over.

Passion without deep, abiding love is so prominent throughout the story that Eugene does not believe that meaningful love exists. He is bored with all human relations, even



to the point of denying to himself that he has deep feelings for Vladimir Lensky. Eugene is willing enough to engage in a deadly duel with his friend because he does not realize that such a duel will hurt him in life more than it hurts Vladimir in death.

Eugene is unwilling to see that Tatyana might have real and deep feelings for him. He believes that she will fall in love with someone else and marry him, and probably that her passions for that other man will then fade. Only by meeting Tanya years later, after she's married another man, does Eugene realize that such a thing as real love exists. Unfortunately, this realization comes too late for happiness, either for Tatyana or for Eugene.

Youth

The poet attributes much trouble and torment to youth. Vladimir Lensky is young, and therefore he is overtaken with naive romantic feelings. Eugene Onegin, in his youth, is obsessed with the art of love and seduction, but he is quickly disillusioned. Even Zaretsky's interference, which leads to Vladimir's death, is put down to the follies of youth. Youth is a time of passion and turmoil, but youth is also only a passing phase.

Youth is compared to springtime, which soon passes into winter. Like life itself, youth is inconstant. Vladimir passes out of youth directly into death. Tatyana's mother passes from youthful passions into the role of mother and matriarch, and her youthful loves are soon forgotten. Eugene passes from the superficial passions of youth into a life-long depression. Zaretsky, whose youthful ventures cause such problems for his neighbors and acquaintances, becomes in time a sedate and loving father.

The narrator mourns his lost youth and the lost passions that once consumed him, too. Even the joy of wine is fading with the passage of youth. Springtime is a time of nostalgic sorrow. Youth is a time of intense feelings, but these feelings fade away with time, leaving only a sense of meaninglessness. Eugene feels this meaninglessness, and that is why he leaves behind all passion and all meaning.

Tatyana is the only character who belies the idea that love is only a folly of youth. For all the other characters, youth and love are synonymous, and they pass away with time. For Tatyana, though, love endures. This implies that, while youth may be the time of turmoil and passion, it is possible to love beyond the turmoil of youth. Tatyana's self-awareness and reflection allow her constant, if unrequited, love.



Style

Point of View

While most of the narrative is told from a third-person point of view and the narrator does not take an active role in the story, the narrator does intersperse first-person observations into the story. In this way, the poet himself becomes a character, in the identity of an unnamed narrator.

However, although the narrator claims to be an acquaintance of Eugene Onegin, and therefore a person in the fictional world of the narrative, the third-person narrator is also omniscient. He knows the deep turmoil that Tatyana goes through in her love for Eugene, even though there is no one to witness it. He knows Tatyana's dream, even though she tells no one about it. The narrator also depicts scenes that neither the narrator nor his friend Eugene could know about, such as the dialogue between Tatyana and her nurse. In this way, the poet is both within the story and outside of it.

The first-person narrator's observations allow the poet to intrude his personal perspective on the narrative. Early in the story, he separates himself from Eugene so that the reader does not think that the novel is a disguised autobiography, by saying that, while Eugene hates the country, the narrator loves it. Eugene's disdain for nature is indicative of his fatal flaw of being governed by and engrossed in (superficial) society, and the narrator therefore draws a line between the narrative point of view that real depth does exist in human relationships and Eugene's point of view that love is only a superficial and fleeting thing.

In the final chapter, the narrator talks about his muse, and finally notes that his muse has shown him a passionate country maiden. In this final part of the novel/poem, the poet admits that the story is not factual but is the product of his poetry, breaking the fiction that Eugene Onegin is an acquaintance.

Setting

The two main settings of Puskin's work are the high society of Moscow and the equally critical society of the Russian countryside. Eugene starts out in Moscow, where he becomes a master of human relationships. He can betray his friends without being detected, and he can manipulate and seduce any woman he chooses. He sees through the games of human interactions in Moscow society, and he knows that they are both superficial and deadly dull, lacking any meaning.

When Tatyana goes to Moscow, she is thrust into this same society that makes Eugene so jaded. Like Eugene, she finds nothing valuable in the chatting women who primp and gossip and search the social functions for their next lover or future husband. Like Eugene, Tatyana learns to outwardly conform to the demands of the society, while secretly condemning and disdaining it.



If Moscow society is superficial, that is not a result of its urban setting. The country setting where both the Larins's and Eugene's estates sit is no less artificial, at least in its human component. The Larins give meaningless parties, following all the social rules that govern such events. The gatherings are as predictable as the sun rising and setting. Tatyana's name-day celebration is full of merriment but empty of substance, similar to the Moscow balls she comes to hate.

However, in the country, despite the ever-present social structure, there is an underlying meaningfulness. Tatyana loves wandering through the countryside, and she loves the nature that surrounds her in her home. Nature represents the reality behind all of the societal posturing of human relations, and Tatyana's love for nature indicates that she, among all the characters, is capable of reality and depth.

Language and Meaning

Pushkin chooses to tell his story as a poem, and the language is at once poetically descriptive and self-conscious of its poetry. He paints portraits of the winter landscape, and then he bows to other poets for their greater ability to portray such scenes. He apologizes for his inability to effectively translate Tatyana's love letter from French into Russian.

The poet extends this self-consciousness in his apology at the end of the novel, recalling classic Greek and Shakespearean plays. Pushkin hopes that the reader has found whatever amusement he or she is looking for and bids a fond farewell to both the reader and the characters. The apology is inherently self-reflexive, pointing out that the novel/poem is a work of fiction, and it echoes earlier self-reflexive passages, notably the writer's description of his muse at the beginning of the eighth chapter.

Pushkin also uses irony and humor in his descriptions. When he first introduces Eugene, Eugene's caustic humor is evident in his comments on his uncle. His uncle has won respect for being ill, "the only clever thing he's done". In his mind, Eugene thinks that others should follow his uncle's example. In Pushkin's depiction of Eugene, this ironic wit continues, as Pushkin notes that of course Eugene is considered a well-educated man for being able to dance and converse well.

The language also uses poetic devices such as repetition ("And now she leaps! And now she whirls!") and alliteration ("dazzling, dancing feet"). While some of these word choices are part of the translation, some are reflections of the original. The poet particularly uses repetition to underscore important ideas.

Structure

The novel is structured in eight fairly even chapters of forty to sixty stanzas. Each stanza is fourteen lines long and follows a regular iambic tetrameter (four iambic feet) and a regular rhyme scheme of A-B-A-B-C-C-D-D-E-F-F-E-G-G. The variation within the stanza gives the rhyme scheme a more natural and rich feeling than a simpler rhyme



scheme, while the poet maintains a strict and regular mode of language throughout the poem.

Pushkin breaks out of his poetic form in several notable places throughout the work. In Tatyana's letter, he uses a similar rhyme scheme but different stanza lengths, and in the girls' song, he breaks his poetic form even more. These interludes represent Tatyana's words and the natural folk song of the peasants; by breaking his poetic form, the poet acknowledges these different voices. Similarly, Onegin's letter breaks Puskin's normal stanza, but the poems of Vladimir Lensky fall into Puskin's stanzas. Pushkin criticizes Lensky for being trite, and the fact that he follows Puskin's stanzas makes this a subtle self-criticism.

The chapters detail different phases of the story. The first chapter establishes Eugene's background and his life in Moscow society. The second chapter establishes Eugene's life in the country and his burgeoning friendship with Vladimir Lensky, the romantic poet. It also introduces Olga and the deeply beautiful and romantic Tatyana. In the third chapter, Tatyana falls in love with the distant Eugene, and she writes her love letter to Eugene. The writer ends the chapter at Eugene's meeting with Tatyana, leaving the reader in suspense regarding Eugene's response. In the fourth chapter, Eugene rejects Tatyana, leaving her in despair, and this is contrasted to Vladimir's naive romance with Olga. An unwitting Vladimir convinces Eugene to go to Tatyana's name-day celebration.

The fifth chapter details Tatyana's superstition and her presentient dream as well as her name-day celebration, which sets into motion the fate of Vladimir. The sixth chapter tells the story of the duel, and the seventh chapter tells its after-effects. Eugene is notably absent in the seventh chapter. In the eighth chapter, Eugene and Tatyana meet again, and now Eugene is the one consumed with unrequited passion, bringing Eugene's story full circle.



Quotes

"My uncle, man of firm convictions... / By falling gravely ill, he's won / A due respect for his afflictions— / The only clever thing he's done." Chap. 1, stanza 1, p. 5

"How shrewdly he could be inventive / And playfully astound the young, / Use flattery as warm incentive, / Or frighten with despairing tongue. / And how he'd seize a moment's weakness / To conquer youthful virtue's meekness / Through force of passion and of sense, / And then await sweet recompense." Chap. 1, stanza 11, p. 9

"At first their differences of heart / Made meetings dull at one another's; / But then their friendship grew, and soon / They'd meet on horse each afternoon, / And in the end were close as brothers. / Thus people—so it seems to me— / Become good friends from sheer ennui." Chap. 2, stanza 13, p. 41

"So she was called Tatyana, reader. / She lacked that fresh and rosy tone / That made her sister's beauty sweeter / And drew all eyes to her alone. / A wild creature, sad and pensive, / Shy as a doe and apprehensive, / Tatyana seemed among her kin / A stranger who had wandered in." Chap. 2, stanza 25, p. 47

"Were I the poet, brother, / I'd choose the elder one instead— / Your Olga's look is cold and dead, / As in some dull, Van Dyck madonna; / So round and fair of face is she, / She's like that stupid moon you see, / Up in that stupid sky you honour.' / Vladimir gave a curt reply / And let the conversation die." Chap. 3, stanza 5, p. 59

"Oh, come! Our world was quite another! / We'd never heard of love, you see. / Why, my good husband's sainted mother / Would just have been the death of me!' / 'Then how'd you come to marry, nanny?' / 'The will of God, I guess...My Danny / Was younger still than me, my dear, / And I was just thirteen that year. / The marriage maker kept on calling / For two whole weeks to see my kin, / Till father blessed me and gave in.'" Chap. 3, stanza 18, p. 65

"He ceased to know infatuation, / Pursuing belles with little zest; / Refused, he found quick consolation; / Betrayed, was always glad to rest. / He sought them out with no elation / And left them too without vexation, / Scarce mindful of their love or spite." — Chap. 4, stanza 10, p. 86

"Each has his own preoccupation, / His favourite sport or avocation: / One aims a gun at ducks on high; / One is entranced by rhyme as I; / One swats at flies in mindless folly; / One dreams of ruling multitudes; / One craves the scent that war exudes; / One likes to bask in melancholy; / One occupies himself with wine: / And good and bad all intertwine." Chap. 4, stanza 36, p. 99

"Since dawn Dame Larin's near relations / Have filled the house; whole congregations / Of neighbour clans have come in drays, / Kibitkas, britzkas, coaches, sleighs. / The hall is full of crowds and bustle; / The drawing room explodes with noise, / With bark of pugs



and maidens' joys, / With laughter, kisses, din and hustle; / The guests all bow and scrape their feet, / Wet nurses shout and babies bleat." Chap. 5, stanza 25, p. 121

"Already cross and irritated / By being at this feast he hated, / And nothing how poor Tanya shoot, / He barely hid his angry look / And fumed in sullen indignation; / He swore that he'd make Lensky pay / And be avenged that very day. / Exulting in anticipation, / He inwardly began to draw / Caricatures of those he saw. / Some others too might well have noted / Poor Tanya's plight; but every eye / Was at the time in full devoted / To sizing up a lavish pie" Chap. 5, stanzas 31-32, p. 124

"He could have shown some spark of feeling / Instead of bristling like a beast; / He should have spoken words of healing, / Disarmed youth's heart...or tried at least. / 'Too late,' he thought, 'the moment's wasted... / What's more, that duelling fox has tasted / His chance to mix in this affair— / That wicked gossip with his flair / For jibes...and all his foul dominion. / He's hardly worth contempt, I know, / But fools will whisper...grin...and crow!...' / So there it is—the mob's opinion!" Chap. 6, stanza 11, p. 138

"He lays a hand, as in confusion, / On breast and falls. His misted eyes / Express not pain, but death's intrusion. / Thus, slowly, down a sloping rise, / And sparkling in the sunlight's shimmer, / A clump of snow will fall and glimmer. / Eugene, in sudden chill, despairs, / Runs to the stricken youth...and stares! / Calls out his name!—No earthly power / Can bring him back: the singer's gone, / Cut down by fate at break of dawn!" Chap. 6, stanza 31, p. 147

"Some pages still preserved the traces / Where fingernails had sharply pressed; / The girl's attentive eye embraces / These lines more quickly than the rest. / And Tanya sees with trepidation / The kind of thought or observation / To which Eugene paid special heed, / Or where he'd tacitly agreed. / And in the margins she inspected / His pencil marks with special care; / And on those pages everywhere / She found Onegin's soul reflected— / In crosses or a jotted note, / Or in the question mark he wrote." Chap. 7, stanza 23, p. 167

"Ah, Moscow! How that sound is freighted / With meaning for our Russian hearts! / How many echoes it imparts!" Chap. 7, stanza 36, p. 173

"The lady didn't shiver, / Or blush, or suddenly turn white... / Or even let an eyebrow quiver, / Or press her lips together tight. / Although Eugene with care inspected / This placid lady, he detected / No trace of Tanya from the past. / And when he tried to speak at last, / He found he couldn't." Chap. 8, stanza 19, p. 195

"To me, Onegin, all these splendors, / This weary tinselled life of mine, / this homage that the great world tenders, / My stylish house where princes dine— / Are empty... I'd as soon be trading / This tattered life of masquerading, / This world of glitter, fumes, and noise, / For just my books, the simple joys / Of our old home, its walks and flowers, / For all those haunts that I once knew... / Where first, Onegin, I saw you;" Chap. 8, stanza 46, p. 209



Topics for Discussion

Compare Tatyana's passion for Eugene and her sister's passion for Vladimir.

What is the significance of Tatyana's dream?

Why does the poet insert his first-person commentary into the novel/poem?

How would Pushkin's story be different as a prose novel instead of a poem?

Explain the symbolism of changing seasons throughout the novel/poem.

Why does Eugene Onegin agree to duel his friend?

What role do the demands of society play in the fates of Eugene, Tatyana, Vladimir, and Olga?

Why does Eugene fall in love with Tatyana when he meets her again in Moscow at the end of the story?