

First Love Study Guide

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Section 1: Prologue and Chapter 1

Section 1: Prologue and Chapter 1 Summary

In the Prologue, it is half past twelve, and all of the the guests have left long ago with only the host, Sergey Nicolayevich and Vladimir Petrovich remaining. The host suggests that each of them tell the story of their first love, starting with Sergey who claims that he began with his second love. When he was eighteen, he courted a girl as though it were nothing new. He loved his nurse when he was six years old, but that is too long ago to remember the details. The host did not fall in love until he met his current wife, Anna Ivanovna, who fell in love immediately even though their marriage was arranged by their fathers. The host relies on the old bachelors and turns to Vladimir. Vladimir's first love was not ordinary, but he would rather not tell the story because he is bad at telling stories. He begs to write it down and read it to them later. The host and Sergey agree, and the three of them meet a fortnight later for Vladimir to read his story.

In the first chapter, Vladimir is sixteen years old during the summer of 1833, and he is living in Moscow with his parents as he prepares for the University. His family rents a summer home near Neskootchny. After his tutor leaves, no one interferes with Vladimir's freedom. His father treats him with good-humored indifference, and his mother scarcely notices him because she is irritated with and scared of her husband who is ten years younger and did not marry her for love. Vladimir will never forget his first weeks in the country. Woman's image has scarcely taken a definitive shape in his mind, but expectancy penetrates his entire being; this expectancy is soon to be fulfilled. Next to his family's summer home is a small lodge to be let. At the end of May, the shutters of the second lodge open, and a woman's face appears in the windows. One day, Vladimir's mother asks the butler about their new neighbor and learns that she is Princess Zasyekin. Mme. Petrovich notes the princess' poverty, and Vladimir agrees because of the condition of the house.

Section 1: Prologue and Chapter 1 Analysis

The first section begins with a frame story which foreshadows the remainder of the novel when the host suggests that he and his friends tell stories of their first loves. Vladimir Petrovich agrees to tell the peculiar story of his first love after he writes it down, thus foreshadowing the narrative being about Vladimir's first love. The frame story also serves to introduce the protagonist, Vladimir Petrovich. Vladimir claims that his first love was not ordinary which leads the reader to suspect the many oddities of the following tale. The first chapter begins by acquainting the reader with the setting of the narrative, including the year and Vladimir's age at the time. Vladimir provides background information concerning his unhappy family life. The statement that Pyotr Petrovich did not marry for love suggests that he married for money. Vladimir's mind is filled with an expectancy about women which is soon to be fulfilled, foreshadowing the introduction to Princess Zinaida Zasyekin. The elderly Princess Zasyekin moving into the lodge next

door to the Petrovichs' summer lodge foreshadows Vladimir's interactions with his new neighbors. The first chapter also alludes to Schiller's "The Robbers."



Section 2: Chapter 2 and Chapter 3

Section 2: Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 Summary

In Chapter 2, Vladimir frequently walks through the garden to shoot crows, but one day he hears voices from across the fence to the lodge. He looks across the fence to see a tall, slender girl with four young men clustered around her as she taps them on the forehead with small, grey flowers. Vladimir would give anything to have his forehead tapped by the girl with the enchanting movements. One man calls to Vladimir, chiding him for staring at an unknown young lady. Vladimir nearly faints as the girl looks at him and begins to laugh. He blushes and runs to his room where he rests, his heart "deliciously constricted" by the image of the girl next door. Vladimir nearly tells his father everything but checks the impulse. In the third chapter, Vladimir takes a stroll in the garden before breakfast the next morning; then, he walks up and down the street, pondering how to make the acquaintance of the girl. As he plots, fate provides for him as his mother receives a letter from Princess Zasyekin asking for Mme. Petrovich's protection since she is intimately acquainted with important people upon whose favor depends the fortunes of the princess and her children as she is involved in several vital lawsuits. Princess Zasyekin begs permission to call upon Mme. Petrovich. Mme. Petrovich sends Vladimir to explain by mouth that she will be ready to offer aid to her ladyship at all times. Vladimir is alarmed by the sudden fulfillment of his secret desire, but he refrains from showing his inner turmoil as he dresses in his frock-coat and his new neck-tie.

Section 2: Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 Analysis

In the second chapter, Vladimir first sees the neighbor girl whom he finds enchanting, foreshadowing Zinaida being the object of Vladimir's first love. Zinaida is surrounded by four young men who admire her; this is the introduction to Zinaida and some of her admirers. Vladimir's amazement while looking at Zinaida foreshadows Vladimir falling in love with Zinaida. The young man yelling at Vladimir for looking at a strange girl demonstrates Vladimir's breach in manners as well as the jealousy amongst Zinaida's admirers. Zinaida's laughter and joy while playing with her admirers in the garden serves to demonstrate her character which foreshadows the changes that take place in her personality. The fact that Vladimir's heart is "deliciously constricted" after seeing Zinaida foreshadows Vladimir falling in love with Zinaida. Vladimir checks an impulse to tell his father everything which foreshadows Pyotr Petrovich's involvement in Vladimir's story. In the third chapter, Vladimir plotting to be introduced to the girl foreshadows his desire for her. Fate providing for him foreshadows Princess Zasyekin's appeal to Mme. Petrovich and his actual introduction to Princess Zasyekin and Zinaida. Vladimir dressing like an adult demonstrates his desire to impress Zinaida.



Section 3: Chapter 4

Section 3: Chapter 4 Summary

In the fourth chapter, Vladimir enters an unkempt hall at the lodge, and a servant, Vonifaty, asks what he wants. At Princess Zasyekin's instructions, Vonifaty takes Vladimir into the drawing room, which contains very shabby furniture. Vladimir tells Princess Zasyekin that his mother would be happy to have the princess call upon her. Princess Zasyekin asks how old Vladimir is and tells him to make himself at home. The girl from the garden appears, and Princess Zasyekin introduces her daughter, Zinochka or Zinaida, who stares at Vladimir with a mocking smile. Zinaida says she has already seen him and asks to call him Monsieur Woldemar, and Vladimir agrees. Zinaida invites him to help wind her wool. Vladimir follows Zinaida into a room with better arranged furniture and helps her wind her wool. She asks what he thought of her yesterday, claiming that she is a very strange twenty-one year old woman. She claims that since she is older than him, he must always be honest with her and do what she tells him. Although Vladimir averts his eyes, Zinaida tells him that he may look at her because she does not find it disagreeable. Zinaida comments on how odd it is that children (she corrects herself to young men) do not say what they feel though adults do. She asks if Vladimir likes her. Vladimir is pleased that Zinaida is frank with him but hurt that she sees him as a little boy. He decides to convince her that he is not just a little boy and tells her that he likes her very much. While Zinaida winds her wool, Vladimir uses the opportunity to closely scrutinize her face. It seems to Vladimir that he has already known Zinaida for a long time, and he could very happily remain with her forever. Zinaida comments on how Vladimir stares at her, causing him to blush and think that she sees and understands everything. When Princess Zasyekin calls Zinaida to tell her that Byelovzorov has brought her a kitten, Zinaida leaves the room, and Vladimir follows. A small tabby stretches and kneads in the middle of the room while one of the men from the garden, a young blonde officer, stands beside Princess Zasyekin. Zinaida thanks Byelovzorov who claims that she said yesterday that she wanted a tabby kitten and her word is law. Zinaida orders the kitten to be fed and taken away. Byelovzorov asks for her hand in return for the kitten, and Zinaida gives him both hands upon which he bestows kisses while Zinaida looks over his shoulder at Vladimir. Vladimir is unsure whether he should laugh, speak or remain silent. Fyodor, the Petrovichs' butler, summons Vladimir because his mother is angry that he has not yet brought an answer though he has been gone for over an hour. Vladimir takes his leave and asks if Princess Zasyekin will honor his mother at two o'clock. Princess Zasyekin says to tell Mme. Petrovich that precisely as she takes snuff noisily. Zinaida tells Vladimir to visit again soon. As Vladimir follows Fyodor home, he wonders why Zinaida is always laughing. Mme. Petrovich scolds her son for being gone so long, but he ignores her and goes to his room, feeling depressed and jealous of Byelovzorov.



Section 3: Chapter 4 Analysis

The shabby furniture and the unkempt hall in Princess Zasyekin's lodge demonstrate her poverty. Foreshadowing is fulfilled as Vladimir meets Princess Zasyekin. When Zinaida enters, she is smiling and laughing as usual, demonstrating her joy with life overall. Zinaida's desire to call Vladimir "Monsieur Woldemar" shows that she plans to be familiar with him. Zinaida claims that she is a strange woman and commands Vladimir to be honest with her and do what she tells him. Zinaida comments on the oddness of children—she quickly changes her statement to young men—not saying what they feel; this demonstrates that Zinaida views Vladimir as a child. Of course, this injures his pride. Vladimir admits to Zinaida that he likes her very much, and he scrutinizes her face as she winds her wool, thinking that he could very happily remain with her forever and feeling like he has already known her for a long time. When Zinaida comments on Vladimir staring at her, Vladimir thinks that she sees and understands everything, setting up a level of reverence in which Vladimir holds Zinaida. Byelovzorov brings a tabby kitten for Zinaida because she asked for one yesterday and her word is law. Byelovzorov's eagerness to please Zinaida demonstrates his devotion to her. Mme. Petrovich's anger over Vladimir being gone so long foreshadows her disapproval of Vladimir spending a lot of time with Zinaida. Princess Zasyekin schedules to call on Mme. Petrovich, foreshadowing her visit to the Petrovichs' summer house. Vladimir's depression and jealousy concerning Byelovzorov foreshadows his love for Zinaida and jealousy of her admirers.



Section 4: Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

Section 4: Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 Summary

In the fifth chapter, Princess Zasyekin calls on Mme. Petrovich who finds the princess tiresome and troublesome. M. Petrovich recalls that the princess' husband was well-bred but empty and ridiculous. Prince Zasyekin gambled away all of his property and then married the daughter of a minor official. Once he began to speculate, he ruined himself. Mme. Petrovich hopes that Princess Zasyekin will not try to borrow money. M. Petrovich has heard that the princess' daughter is a very charming and cultivated girl. Vladimir feels very uncomfortable during this conversation. After dinner, Vladimir walks through the garden, promising himself to stay away from the Zasyekins' garden, but he is drawn by an uncontrollable force. Vladimir sees Zinaida with a book and coughs to get her attention. She turns, smiles and resumes reading. Vladimir hears footsteps as his father approaches and asks if that is the young princess and if Vladimir knows her. Vladimir explains that he met Zinaida at her mother's lodge this morning. M. Petrovich turns and bows to Zinaida who bows, looking surprised and following M. Petrovich with her eyes. Vladimir sees his father as more elegant than ever in this moment. When Vladimir moves toward Zinaida, she does not look at him but resumes reading and walks away. In the next chapter, Vladimir spends that evening and the following morning in misery and unable to study. He prepares for dinner, but his mother forces him to wear his short jacket instead of his frock-coat. Princess Zasyekin and Zinaida arrive thirty minutes before dinner. Princess Zasyekin acts very comfortable and familiar with the Petrovichs, but Zinaida is haughty and cold, causing Vladimir to see her as even more beautiful. M. Petrovich sits beside Zinaida and talks to her, but she looks at him with hostility. Mme. Petrovich finds the princess tedious, and the next day, she says that Zinaida is conceited. During dinner, Zinaida pays no attention to Vladimir. As Princess Zasyekin takes leave, she thanks the Petrovichs for their protection. M. Petrovich bows and accompanies her to the door. Vladimir stares at the floor, stricken by the way Zinaida treats him, but as she passes him, she offers a warm expression and whispers an invitation for him to see her at eight o'clock, urging him not to fail her. Vladimir throws his hands in the air, but Zinaida is already gone.

Section 4: Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 Analysis

In the fifth chapter, Princess Zasyekin calls on Mme. Petrovich, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing, and Mme. Petrovich's feeling that the princess is tiresome and troublesome is the first of many repetitions to that effect. When M. Petrovich talks to his wife, he recalls details about Prince Zasyekin which provides background information about Princess Zasyekin and Zinaida. M. Petrovich claiming that he has heard that Zinaida is a very charming and cultivated girl foreshadows his affair with Zinaida; however, this statement makes it unclear whether M. Petrovich has actually met Zinaida before. Vladimir's breaking his promise to himself to stay away from the Zasyekins' garden because he is drawn by an uncontrollable force demonstrates that Vladimir



loves Zinaida. Furthermore, it shows Zinaida's power over Vladimir. When Vladimir sees Zinaida reading, she ignores him, demonstrating her indifference. Vladimir's love is shown by the fact that he is sad when Zinaida ignores him in the garden. Princess Zasyekin acts familiar when she visits the Petrovichs, and this characterizes the woman and justifies Mme. Petrovich's opinion. The next day, Mme. Petrovich says that Zinaida is conceited, further foreshadowing Mme. Petrovich's opinion of Zinaida. Vladimir being stricken by the way that Zinaida treats him shows the Vladimir loves Zinaida. After treating Vladimir coldly, Zinaida offers him a warm expression and an invitation for him to visit her at eight o'clock. This shows the oddity of Zinaida.



Section 5: Chapter 7

Section 5: Chapter 7 Summary

In the seventh chapter, Vladimir arrives at Princess Zasyekin's lodge punctually at eight o'clock, and a servant directs him to a room resounding with cheerful sounds. Vladimir enters to see Zinaida standing on a chair with a man's hat as five young men cluster around her, trying to put their hands into the hat. Zinaida stops and introduces "Monsieur Woldemar" to Count Malevsky, Doctor Looshin, the poet Maidanov, the retired Captain Nirmatsky and Byelovzorov the hussar whom Vladimir has already met. Zinaida instructs Count Malevsky to write out a ticket for Vladimir, but the men object that this is not fair since Vladimir did not participate in their game of forfeits. Zinaida asks if this is a mutiny and says that the rules do not apply to Vladimir since this is his first day. Count Malevsky yields as Dr. Looshin explains that Zinadia paid a forfeit and the winner who draws the lucky ticket will have the right to kiss her hand. Zinaida suggests Maidanov yield his ticket to Vladimir for a second chance, but Maidanov refuses. Vladimir draws the ticket that says "kiss," and Zinaida is pleased. When Byelovzorov offers to buy the ticket for one hundred roubles, Vladimir looks at him indignantly. Dr. Looshin instructs Vladimir to go down on one knee to kiss Zinaida's hand, but Vladimir falls to both knees and awkwardly kisses her hand, scratching his nose on her nail. The game continues with Zinaida placing Vladimir beside her. Vladimir is intoxicated by the laughter, excitement and noise, and he does not care about the cross looks directed at him. After playing forfeits, the group plays a game of String; then, they play the piano, sing and dance. Count Malvesky does card tricks, and Maidanov recites fragments from his poem "The Murderer." During the merriment, Byelovzorov sits in the corner, glaring at the others. At times, he seems ready to attack until Zinaida shakes her finger at him causing him to retreat to his corner. Princess Zasyekin retires, and dinner is presented at midnight. Exhausted but happy, Vladimir leaves, and Zinaida presses his hand and smiles mysteriously. Vladimir creeps home, stepping over his man sleeping on the floor. His man awakes and tells Vladimir that his mother is angry again and wanted to send for him, but his father restrained her. Vladimir says he will undress himself and goes to his room where he sits in his chair as though under a spell. He feels like he is in love. Vladimir lies down for a bit but does not close his eyes. Seeing light outside, he goes to the window and watches the storm until morning. He finally goes to sleep though images of Zinaida hover in his mind. Vladimir, in the present, asks where are the first tender, touching joys of love.

Section 5: Chapter 7 Analysis

When Vladimir enters Princess Zasyekin's lodge, he hears cheerful sounds resounding from the room where Zinaida and her admirers are playing. Vladimir enters the room to see Zinaida with her five admirers. Zinaida's admirers are all introduced and described in this chapter. The men's objections to Vladimir joining in choosing a ticket from the hat demonstrates their jealousy of each other and of Vladimir. When Zinaida asks if this is a



mutiny, that demonstrates her power and sovereignty over the men. Dr. Looshin shows himself to be the kindest of Zinaida's admirers when he explains the rules of the game to Vladimir; however, when luck provides Vladimir with the ticket that says "kiss," all of the admirers are jealous. Furthermore, Byelovzorov shows his devotion and desperation when he offers to buy the ticket from Vladimir. Vladimir's awkwardness when claiming his kiss demonstrates his youth and innocence. The cross looks directed at Vladimir demonstrate the jealousy of Zinaida's other admirers. During the jovialities, Byelovzorov shows his ridiculous jealousy by glaring at the others, and he is controlled only by Zinaida. The fact that Mme. Petrovich gets mad every time that Vladimir hangs out with Zinaida shows Mme. Petrovich's opinion of Princess Zasyekin and Zinaida. Vladimir's peacefulness when he goes home is a result of his feelings for Zinaida. Retrospectively, Vladimir asks where are the first tender, touching joys of love, foreshadowing an ending to his first love that results in never having that same feeling again.



Section 6: Chapter 8

Section 6: Chapter 8 Summary

In Chapter eight, Mme. Petrovich chides Vladimir and makes him describe his evening at Princess Zasyekin's. She wishes that he would study for his exam instead of spending so much time with Zinaida. After breakfast, Vladimir and his father walk through the garden, and his father also asks for a full account of his evening. Vladimir has a curious relationship with his father; at times, his father is very kind and Vladimir confides in him, but then M. Petrovich will abandon his son. Vladimir sees his father as the ideal man, but only once did his father tenderly caress Vladimir to the point that he nearly cried. M. Petrovich's tenderness never gives Vladimir hope for the future because he knows that his father will coldly abandon him. Later in life, Vladimir comes to the conclusion that his father cares nothing about Vladimir or his family life. M. Petrovich tells Vladimir that to belong to oneself is the whole thing in life. When Vladimir discusses liberty with his father, M. Petrovich says one's own will makes a man free. M. Petrovich wants to live and maybe foresees an early death for himself. Vladimir gives his father a detailed account of his evening with Zinaida and is unable to refrain from praising Zinaida. M. Petrovich grows thoughtful. Though M. Petrovich orders his horse to be saddled as he leaves the house, when Vladimir asks if his father wants him to join him for the ride, his father grows cold and states that Vladimir can go alone but he will not be going. M. Petrovich goes to the Zasyekins' house and stays for about an hour before going to town for the evening. After dinner, Vladimir calls on the Zasyekins and finds Princess Zasyekin in the drawing room. Princess Zasyekin asks Vladimir to copy a petition for her tonight, and he agrees. A door opens to show Zinaida, who looks coldly at Vladimir before shutting the door. Zinaida ignores her mother's summons. Vladimir spends the remainder of his evening copying Princess Zasyekin's petition.

Section 6: Chapter 8 Analysis

Again, Mme. Petrovich chides Vladimir for his time spent with Zinaida, repetitively showing that Mme. Petrovich does not like the Zasyekins. Furthermore, this foreshadows the Zasyekins' negative effect in the Petrovichs' lives. M. Petrovich asking his son for a full account of his evening with Zinaida demonstrates his interest in Zinaida and foreshadows his affair. Next, Vladimir describes his odd relationship with his father. M. Petrovich gives his son two important pieces of advice: that to belong to oneself is the whole thing in life, and one's own will makes a man free. Vladimir claiming that perhaps his father foresees an early death for himself foreshadows M. Petrovich's death. M. Petrovich grows thoughtful and goes to the Zasyekins' house, foreshadowing his affair with Zinaida. Princess Zasyekin shows herself to be needy and annoying when she asks Vladimir to copy a petition for her. Zinaida looking coldly at Vladimir before shutting the door hints at Zinaida being angry at Vladimir as a result of her discussion with his father.



Section 7: Chapter 9

Section 7: Chapter 9 Summary

The ninth chapter opens with the day which is the beginning of Vladimir's passion and his suffering. He cannot think about anything except Zinaida who guesses at once that Vladimir, who never thinks to conceal it, has fallen in love with her. Vladimir is not the only one to love Zinaida; all the men who visit her are infatuated with her, and Zinaida finds it amusing since she thinks that all of her admirers are necessary to her. Zinaida's consciousness of superiority over her surroundings creates in her a half-contemptuous kind of carelessness. Vladimir's blood rises when Count Malevsky whispers to Zinaida, who smiles and shakes her head. When Vladimir asks why Zinaida receives Count Malevsky, she claims he has such beautiful little mustaches and that it is not Vladimir's province anyway. Another time, she assures Vladimir that she does not love Count Malevsky because she cannot love anyone she looks down upon. Zinaida needs someone who will master her but no such person exists so she will never fall into anyone's clutches. Vladimir asks if she will ever love anyone, and she claims that she loves him as she flicks his nose. Zinaida makes fun of Vladimir constantly, and he sees her everyday for three weeks. She calls on the Petrovichs seldom, and he is not sorry because in his house she transforms into a young lady and a princess. Vladimir is frightened of his mother recognizing his feelings for Zinaida since she does not think well of the young princess. M. Petrovich ignores Vladimir and scarcely speaks to Zinaida.

Vladimir ceases to work or even walk around the neighborhood, feeling that he can stay at the lodge forever; however, his mother's grumbles, as well as Zinaida herself at times, drive him away. When this occurs, he gazes at nothing in tranquility, not understanding his feelings which he can only name Zinaida. Zinaida plays with Vladimir, sometimes flirting and sometimes pushing him away. Once Zinaida is cold to Vladimir for several days, during which Vladimir visits Princess Zasyekin though she is querulous due to her financial affairs going badly and two encounters with the local police. Once, Vladimir sees Zinaida motionless in the grass as he walks through the garden. He begins to tiptoe away, but she beckons to him. When Vladimir asks her what is wrong, Zinaida asks if he loves her very much. Though he does not reply, she can see that he does. Everything is horrible to Zinaida, and she wishes she could go to the other end of the world. Vladimir asks why she is so wretched, but she merely shrugs. At that moment, Vladimir would give his life to end Zinaida's grief. Zinaida asks him to read her poetry from "On Georgia's Hills," and he complies. According to Zinaida, the poetry speaks of what does not exist but what is better than that which does exist and even more like the truth. Zinaida invites Vladimir to join her at the lodge where Maidanov is with Princess Zasyekin. Maidanov brought his poem to Zinaida, and she hurt him by leaving him. Vladimir and Zinaida go to the lodge and listen to Maidanov recite from "The Murderer." Vladimir does not listen and is only able to look at Zinaida, trying to grasp the meaning of her last words. Zinaida and Vladimir's eyes meet after Maidanov reads about a secret rival. When Zinaida blushes and looks down, Vladimir freezes with



terror; he was jealous before but the realization that Zinaida is in love flashes through his mind, filling him with horror.

Section 7: Chapter 9 Analysis

The ninth chapter shows the beginning of Vladimir's passion and his suffering. The fact that Zinaida immediately guesses that Vladimir loves her shows that he is very obvious, especially since he admits that he never thinks to conceal it. Vladimir first admits at this point in the narrative that he is in love with Zinaida, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing; however, he also claims that her other admirers are in love with her as well. Next, Vladimir describes Zinaida's relationships with all of her admirers. Zinaida mocks Vladimir's jealousy of Count Malevsky, but she also claims that she cannot love anyone she looks down upon. Zinaida's claim that she needs someone who will master her foreshadows her falling in love. Zinaida teases Vladimir by claiming that she loves him. Zinaida tortures Vladimir constantly because she knows that he loves her. Zinaida seldom visits the Petrovichs' residence, and Vladimir is glad because she becomes cold and distant, which hurts him because she is friendly and familiar at her mother's lodge. Vladimir fears his mother learning of his feelings for Zinaida because Mme. Petrovich thinks poorly of the young princess. Vladimir's interactions with Zinaida make him tranquil and peaceful; he does not understand the new emotions evolving in him and can only name them "Zinaida" after the one who inspires them, showing his love for his neighbor. When Vladimir sees Zinaida lying in the grass, she motions him over and reveals her sadness. As a result, Vladimir demonstrates his love for Zinaida by his statement that he would have given his life to end her grief. Zinaida hints at being in love when she claims that poetry speaks of what does not exist but what is better than that which does exist and even more like the truth. While Zinaida and Vladimir listen to Maidanov's poetry, Zinaida blushes when Maidanov mentions "secret rivals," causing Vladimir to suspect that Zinaida is in love.



Section 8: Chapter 10, Chapter 11 and Chapter 12

Section 8: Chapter 10, Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 Summary

Chapter ten shows that Vladimir's real torment begins from that moment. He keeps a secret watch over Zinaida who has obviously changed. He considers the possibilities and considers Count Malevsky as the most dangerous. No one is deceived by Vladimir's secretiveness. Dr. Looshin soon sees through Vladimir. Dr. Looshin is also altered during this time, growing more malicious. Alone in the drawing-room, Dr. Looshin chides Vladimir for constantly being at the Zasyekins' lodge when he should be studying or working. His choice is unfortunate since the atmosphere is unhealthy for a young man, according to Dr. Looshin who also sees Vladimir's heart written all over his face. Princess Zasyekin enters and complains about a toothache. When Zinaida enters, Princess Zasyekin tells Dr. Looshin to chide her for drinking iced water all day long, and Dr. Looshin complies, stating that Zinaida could catch a cold. Zinaida claims that this kind of life is worth risking for the momentary pleasure of drinking water. Dr. Looshin says that Zinaida's whole nature is conveyed by caprice and independence. Zinaida chides Vladimir for looking so sad because she cannot bear to be pitied, and she leaves the room quickly. Dr. Looshin reiterates that the atmosphere at the lodge is bad for Vladimir.

In the eleventh chapter, that evening, the usual guests, including Vladimir, gather at the Zasyekins' lodge to discuss Maidanov's poetry. Zinaida sincerely praises the poem but suggest Maidanov write on a different subject. She would depict a company of young girls in a large boat on a quiet river at night, singing a hymn. A loud noise from the bank shows Bacchic rout singing. The Bacchantes call to the girls who stop singing their hymn. The river carries the girls toward the bank, and one of them rises. Her friends are frightened as she steps over the edge of the boat, and the Bacchantes whirl her off into the dark. The poet must paint chaos and the girls' cries and the one's wreath lying on the bank. Zinaida ceases, and Vladimir again thinks that she is in love. Maidanov claims that her idea is not long enough for an entire poem, but he will use it for a lyric in the Byronic style. Count Malevsky and Maidanov begin to argue about Classicism and Romanticism, but Zinaida interjects because she wants to play analogies instead. She asks them about the clouds, recalling Maidanov's recent analogy about clouds being like purple sails in the golden ship in which Cleopatra sailed to meet Antony. The others concede that they can come up with no better analogy. Zinaida asks how old Antony was at the time, and Dr. Looshin says over forty years old, causing her to repeat the age as she looks at Dr. Looshin. Vladimir goes home soon after, whispering that she is in love but wondering with whom.



In the next chapter, Zinaida grows stranger as the days pass. One day, Vladimir finds her in a wicker chair with her head on the table and her face wet with tears. She summons him and twists his hair, hurting him and pulling a lock out of his head. Zinaida laments injuring him and swears to wear his hair in a locket to comfort him a little. Vladimir returns home to hear his mother reproaching his father. Mme. Petrovich calls Zinaida "une femme capable de tout" and disapproves of Vladimir's frequent visits. Vladimir goes to his room, grieved by Zinaida's tears, and gives himself up to fruitless speculation. Vladimir becomes fond of sitting on the high wall of the greenhouse. One day, he feels a presence and sees Zinaida. She stops when she sees him and tells him that if he really loves her, he will jump down to the road where she is standing. Without hesitation, Vladimir complies and jumps from the fourteen foot wall, falling upon impact and losing consciousness for an instant. He comes to with Zinaida near him, softly chiding him for listening to her when he knows she loves him. Zinaida begins to kiss his face, but when she touches his lips, she realizes he has regained consciousness, chides him for lying in the dust, and commands him to get up. Zinaida forbids Vladimir to follow her and moves away quickly. Vladimir is pained from the fall but experiences a sense of bliss unlike any other in his life. This bliss resolves itself in leaps and cries because he was "indeed, still a child."

Section 8: Chapter 10, Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 Analysis

In the tenth chapter, Vladimir's real torment begins, insinuating that loving Zinaida is not nearly as tortuous as knowing that she loves another. Vladimir secretly watches Zinaida's interactions with her other admirers and considers the possibilities of whom she may be in love with, showing his jealousy and love. Parallel to Zinaida's changes, Dr. Looshin changes, becoming more malicious, which suggests that he is aware that Zinaida is in love with another man. He tells Vladimir that the environment is not healthy for a young man, suggesting that Vladimir will get hurt. Dr. Looshin moreover tells Vladimir that his heart is written all over his face. Zinaida's claim that this type of life is worth risking for the momentary pleasure of drinking a glass of cold water shows her unhappiness, which contrasts sharply with Vladimir's first gay image of her in the garden. In the eleventh chapter, Zinaida plots a poem which causes Vladimir to suspect that she is in love. While discussing Antony and Cleopatra, Zinaida grows very thoughtful and dreamy upon Dr. Looshin telling her that Antony was over forty years old when Cleopatra sailed to meet him; this suggests that Zinaida is in love with an older man which further foreshadows Zinaida's affair with Pyotr Petrovich. Vladimir is sad after leaving Zinaida because he knows that she is in love. When Zinaida hurts Vladimir in chapter twelve, it shows that she is irritable, but she apologizes because she did not intend to actually pull his hair out. She offers to wear his hair in a locket to comfort him, something that ladies would do as a connection with their beaux. Mme. Petrovich continues to chide her son for spending so much time with Zinaida, and he repetitively ponders who Zinaida's beloved could be. Vladimir proves his love for Zinaida when he jumps from the greenhouse, and her reaction causes him to believe that he is the one

she longs for, resulting in his unprecedented bliss. Retrospectively, Vladimir admits that he was, indeed, still a child, an admission of his own innocence and naivete.



Section 9: Chapter 13 and Chapter 14

Section 9: Chapter 13 and Chapter 14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Vladimir feels happy and proud all day. The next day, he is embarrassed to go to the lodge and tries to put on a modest but self-assured expression. Zinaida receives Vladimir simply and without emotion. Vladimir's self assurance and modesty vanish as he realizes that Zinaida sees him only as a child. He thinks about where she was rushing yesterday, but he lets it pass and sits in the corner. Byelovzorov arrives and announces that he has not managed to procure a quiet horse for Zinaida. He is afraid because Zinaida does not know how to ride a horse. She says she will just ask Pyotr Vassilievich to obtain a horse for her, shocking Vladimir with the easy manner in which she mentions his father. Byelovzorov asks if Zinaida means to ride with Pyotr, and she says it makes no difference since she does not mean to ride with him. When Byelovzorov asks if she means to ride with Count Malevsky, she questions why not and invites Byelovzorov as well. She also invites Vladimir, but he states that he is not fond of a large company. Zinaida dismisses Byelovzorov, claiming she must have a horse tomorrow. When Princess Zasyekin asks where she will get the money for a horse, Zinaida claims Byelovzorov will trust her and that she does not expect her mother to pay for her horse. Byelovzorov leaves, accompanied by Vladimir whom Zinaida makes no effort to detain. In the next chapter, Vladimir wakes early the next day and goes for a walk beyond the town gate with the intention of giving himself up to gloomy reflections, but his youth and the beauty of the day proves too strong. Vladimir thinks that Zinaida cannot fail to recognize his resolutions and envisions himself saving her from her enemies. He tries to compose a poem but comes up only with the last line "Oh Zinaida! Zinaida!" Dinner approaches, and Vladimir wanders down into the valley along the path until he hears the thud of hooves behind him. Vladimir turns to see his father and Zinaida riding side by side. His father is talking to Zinaida and smiling. Byelovzorov comes into view on a black horse, and Vladimir moves out of their way. His father gathers the reins and leans away from Zinaida who looks at Pyotr before they gallop off with Byelovzorov racing after them. Vladimir wonders why Byelovzorov is red while Zinaida is pale. Vladimir walks home quickly to find his father already at the dinner table, reading to Mme. Petrovich. Mme. Petrovich chides Vladimir for going off God knows where and with God knows who, causing Vladimir to nearly assert the fact that he was alone; however, one glance at his father convinces Vladimir to remain silent for some reason.

Section 9: Chapter 13 and Chapter 14 Analysis

Vladimir's joy shows his youth and inexperience as well as his belief that Zinaida is in love with him. He loses his self-assurance as soon as Zinaida receives him emotionlessly, realizing that she sees him merely as a child. Vladimir considers asking Zinaida where she was going yesterday but decides against it, likely because he knows that the question will anger her since she forbid him to follow her. The conversation



between Zinaida and Byelovzorov foreshadows Zinaida going horseback riding. Her mention of Pyotr Petrovich is slightly odd and foreshadows the discovery of her affair with Vladimir's father. Byelovzorov demonstrates his jealousy when Zinaida mentions Pyotr, but she shows her formerly characteristic mockery by claiming that anyone can come. Vladimir's love for Zinaida is evident in chapter fourteen as he composes poetry though he can only think to include Zinaida's name in his poem. Vladimir sees Zinaida, Byelovzorov and his father riding horses past him; this fulfills the foreshadowing in the previous chapter concerning Zinaida going horseback riding, but it also foreshadows that Zinaida and Pyotr are having an affair. This foreshadowing is further emphasized by the fact that Pyotr is leaning toward Zinaida and smiling while Byelovzorov trails behind the pair. When Mme. Petrovich insinuates that Vladimir was spending time with Zinaida again, he nearly tells her that he was alone, but a glance at his father convinces him to hold his tongue, foreshadowing the affair between Pyotr Petrovich and Princess Zinaida Zasyekin.



Section 10: Chapter 15

Section 10: Chapter 15 Summary

In Chapter 15, Vladimir hardly sees Zinaida during the next five or six days because Zinaida claims that she is unwell. All except Maidanov still visit the lodge. Byelovzorov sulks in the corner. Count Malevsky really falls out of favor with Zinaida and waits upon Princess Zasyekin. Dr. Looshin comes daily for a short time. Though Vladimir is frightened of Dr. Looshin, he is also attracted to him. One day, Dr. Looshin and Vladimir walk in the garden. Dr. Looshin is amiable until he smacks himself on the forehead and exclaims, "I, like a fool, thought that she was a flirt. Evidently to sacrifice oneself is the height of bliss—for some people!" Zinaida ignores Vladimir's presence, which she obviously finds disagreeable. She changes again, and Vladimir is stricken forcibly by the change as he sits in the corner of the garden where he can see Zinaida's window. Zinaida opens her window, stares motionless for a long time, tosses her hair, nods with an air of resolution and slams the window. Three days later, Zinaida meets Vladimir in the garden, claiming that they have not had a gossip for a long time. Vladimir asks if Zinaida is still unwell, and she assures him that she is better but still a little tired. He asks if she will be the same as before when the tiredness passes. When Zinaida asks if she has changed, he says yes, and Zinaida notes that she has been cold to Vladimir but could not help it. Vladimir claims that she does not want him to love her, but she rebuts that she wants him to love her as a friend, not as before. Zinaida admits that he is a child to her but a child that she loves very much. She appoints him to be her page since pages never leave their mistresses' sides. Zinaida puts a rose in Vladimir's buttonhole as a sign of her favor. He murmurs that he has received other favors from her before, and Zinaida kisses Vladimir's forehead and tells him to follow her as she walks toward the lodge. Vladimir follows, unable to understand that this gentle, sensible girl is the same one that he used to know. Zinaida's walk is gentler, and her figure is statelier and more graceful. Love flames up with fresh force in Vladimir.

Section 10: Chapter 15 Analysis

Zinaida claims to be unwell and isolates herself so that Vladimir does not see her for nearly a week. This demonstrates the changes that occur in Zinaida and suggests her emotional trauma that results from her affair with Pyotr Petrovich. All of Zinaida's admirers still visit the lodge every day, showing their devotion to her. Dr. Looshin's statement that to "sacrifice oneself is the height of bliss—for some people" obviously refers to Zinaida and suggests that her beloved is not eligible, further foreshadowing the fact that Zinaida's beloved is Pyotr Petrovich, a married man. Zinaida ignores Vladimir for a while, but she finally approaches him in the garden to renew their friendship; however, she admits that she is changed and has been cold to him, but she wants him to love her as a friend, not as before. She also admits that Vladimir is a child to her, though a child that she loves very much. Zinaida names Vladimir as her page to show him that she considers him important to her. Vladimir compares this Zinaida to the one

earlier in the book, but, though she is very different, love flames up freshly because Vladimir still is in love with her.



Section 11: Chapter 16

Section 11: Chapter 16 Summary

In the sixteenth chapter, they all gather at the lodge and play forfeits again but without the gay, gipsy element. Zinaida suggests that everyone share their dreams, but the dreams are either boring or made up so Zinaida decides that everyone should tell stories. Zinaida tells a story about a single queen who holds a ball and is surrounded by her many admirers who are all in love with her. The queen looks out the window at a fountain in the garden and thinks about the one waiting there to whom she is enslaved. He is sure that she will come to him, and she will. Count Malevsky asks if this is fiction, and Zinaida does not answer. Dr. Looshin asks how each of them would act if they were the guests at the ball and knew about the man by the fountain. Zinaida claims to know: Byelovzorov would challenge him to a duel, Maidanov would write a poem about it, and Captain Nirmatsky would loan him money at interest, but she does not know about Dr. Looshin. Dr. Looshin claims that he would advise the queen not to give balls when she is in no mood for guests. Zinaida claims that Count Malevsky would offer the man by the fountain a poisoned sweet but changes the subject before stating what "Monsieur Woldemar" would do. Count Malevsky interjects that Vladimir, as the queen's page, would carry the queen's train as she ran into the garden. Zinaida tells Count Malevsky to leave, and he apologizes. She smiles coldly but allows him to stay. The game continues for a short time but is strained. Maidanov reads verses which Count Malevsky praises. Zinaida notes that Count Malevsky is attempting to appear kind now. The party disperses, and Vladimir goes home but cannot sleep, wondering if Zinaida's story is true and who the man at the fountain is. Vladimir perceives in Zinaida an adventuress as his mother once claimed. He burns with indignation but is still loyal to Zinaida. Vladimir goes to the garden where he sees or imagines a woman's figure. Though he asks who is there, no one answers. Everything grows quiet, and Vladimir returns to bed in a strange excitement as if he went to a rendezvous not to meet someone himself but passed close to another's happiness.

Section 11: Chapter 16 Analysis

Zinaida and all of her admirers gather again in chapter sixteen, but the gypsy element is no longer present because Zinaida has changed. Zinaida decides that everyone will tell stories; her stories about a queen holding a ball obviously parallels the party that she is holding with her admirers and convinces all of her admirers that she is in love with someone and has a rendezvous planned for later in the evening. Count Malevsky emphasizes this fact by asking her explicitly if her story is fiction. Zinaida tells the men how each of them would react if they were the admirers at the ball and knew about the man at the fountain in the garden. By this means, Zinaida mocks and shows the men how unimportant they truly are to her, though she stops short of injuring Vladimir. Furthermore, when Count Malevsky maliciously attacks the boy, Zinaida banishes him. The evening continues uncomfortably due to the suspicions of Zinaida's admirers.



Section 12: Chapter 17

Section 12: Chapter 17 Summary

In Chapter 17, the next day, Zinaida and Princess Zasyekin leave in a cab to go somewhere. Count Malevsky visits Vladimir's house and claims Vladimir is a bad page since a good page would be by his queen day and night. He suggests that Vladimir keep watch at night in the garden by the fountain. Although he suspects a practical joke, Vladimir's blood boils, and he decides to follow Count Malevsky's advice. Vladimir sticks a penknife in his pocket and plans an ambush all day, waiting for midnight. At midnight, Vladimir takes his post for the ambush in the quiet night. Feeling foolish, he wanders around the garden and climbs up onto the greenhouse where he hears a twig snap. Vladimir climbs down from the greenhouse, thinking he is here at last and opening his penknife. Vladimir prepares to meet the approaching man and sees his father! "Jealous Othello" is at once transformed into a scared schoolboy who wonders why his father is in the garden so late at night. Vladimir drops his penknife in the grass. As he walks back to the house, Vladimir looks at Zinaida's window and sees a blind cautiously lowered. He wonders what is going on, but the ideas in Vladimir's head are so new and strange that he does not allow himself to dwell on them.

Section 12: Chapter 17 Analysis

Count Malevsky's insinuations that Vladimir should watch for Zinaida to meet her beloved in the garden by the fountain demonstrates his knowledge of Zinaida's affair with Pyotr Petrovich as well as his malice. Vladimir's jealousy is obvious as he prepares to ambush Zinaida's lover. As he takes his post, Vladimir begins to feel foolish and decides to give over his quest; however, the sounds of someone approaching strengthen Vladimir's resolve, at least until he sees his father. Pyotr Petrovich's appearance in the garden foreshadows the discovery of his affair with Zinaida though Vladimir still does not fully catch on because the ideas in his head are too new and strange for him to dwell on. In this chapter, Vladimir alludes to Othello when he compares himself with Shakespeare's famous character.



Section 13: Chapter 18 and Chapter 19

Section 13: Chapter 18 and Chapter 19 Summary

In the eighteenth chapter, Vladimir has a headache the next morning and is terribly depressed. He watches his parents at lunch; his mother is secretly irritated as usual, and his father is calm though he is not even coldly affectionate toward Vladimir. Vladimir wonders if he should talk to Zinaida. He goes to see her but does not get to talk to her because Princess Zasyekin's twelve year old son, a cadet, has arrived for his school holiday. Zinaida introduces the cadet and Vladimir, asking Vladimir to play with her younger brother. Vladimir takes the cadet to the garden and pushes him on a swing. Vladimir is sad because today he is only a little boy. Vladimir recalls his dropped penknife and retrieves it. The cadet borrows Vladimir's penknife to make a whistle. Vladimir refers again to himself as Othello, who also whistled. That evening, Zinaida finds Vladimir crying in the corner of the garden and asks why he is so sad. Vladimir accuses Zinaida of playing with him, claims that he knows everything and asks why she needed his love. Zinaida admits that she is guilty and wicked but claims that she loves Vladimir very much. When Zinaida asks what he knows, Vladimir says he cannot tell her. Fifteen minutes later, Vladimir plays tag with Zinaida and the cadet but cries even as he laughs. He wears Zinaida's ribbon around his neck instead of a tie. Vladimir screams with joy when he catches Zinaida around the waist, and Zinaida does whatever she likes with Vladimir.

In the next chapter, it is difficult for Vladimir to give a detailed account of the week after his unlucky venture because it is a queer, feverish period. Vladimir fears looking into himself because he does not want to know if he is loved and does not want to admit that he is not. He avoids his father but cannot avoid Zinaida. Vladimir gives himself freely to the sensations of burning and melting. One day, Vladimir comes home to dinner from a walk to learn that he is to dine alone; his father is gone, and his mother is unwell. Vladimir can tell by the servants' faces that something is very unusual, but he does not care to question them. He asks Philip, the pantry boy and his friend, who tells him about a terrible scene between M. Petrovich and Mme. Petrovich. Vladimir's mother accuses her husband of being unfaithful with the girl next door, and M. Petrovich defends himself at first but then says something brutal about his wife's age. She makes disagreeable remarks about Princess Zasyekin and Zinaida, causing M. Petrovich to threaten her. Philip claims the mischief has been achieved by an anonymous letter, but these things always come out in the open. Vladimir asks if there is something in his mother's accusations. Philip states that though Vladimir's father was very careful, there are always witnesses to hiring carriages and such activities. Vladimir sends Philip away and flings himself on the bed. He does not give himself up to despair, ask where or how it happened, wonder how he did not guess it earlier, or harbor bitter thoughts toward his father. What Vladimir learns is too much for him to manage, and the sudden revelation crushes him. All of the flowers are torn up by the roots and lie trampled underfoot.



Section 13: Chapter 18 and Chapter 19 Analysis

Vladimir's headache and depression the morning after seeing his father in the garden after midnight demonstrates that Vladimir suspects his father of being Zinaida's beloved, even if he is unwilling to think too hard about it or acknowledge it, even to himself. Pyotr Petrovich is even more cold than usual to his son, suggesting that he knows of his son's affection for his mistress. Vladimir considers talking to Zinaida about what he suspects, but he never gets the chance because her younger brother has arrived to visit during his school holiday. The fact that Zinaida asks Vladimir to play with her brother shows that Zinaida sees Vladimir as a child. Vladimir again alludes to Othello when he compares himself to the damned character. When Zinaida joins Vladimir and her brother, she asks why Vladimir is so sad, and he accuses her of playing with him and tells her that he knows everything. Zinaida evades the everything that Vladimir knows and assures him that she does love him very much as a friend. For a week after his discovery, Vladimir is feverish and feels queer. He is afraid to look too deep inside himself because he knows that his parents do not love him and does not want to be forced to admit that, even to himself. Vladimir comes home to dinner one day to learn that his mother is unwell and his father is gone. Further investigation reveals that Mme. Petrovich has learned about her husband's affair with Zinaida. Vladimir does not question it because what he has learned is too much for him to handle; he is crushed by the sudden revelation because the two people that he idolizes the most in the world have committed this act together.



Section 14: Chapter 20

Section 14: Chapter 20 Summary

In Chapter 20, Mme. Petrovich announces the next day that she is moving back to town. M. Petrovich talks to her, but her plans do not change. That evening, M. Petrovich takes Count Malevsky to the hall and forbids him to set foot in the house again, and the count vanishes. The Petrovichs prepare to return to town, and M. Petrovich convinces his wife not to start a public scandal. Mme. Petrovich sends her compliments to Princess Zasyekin with the excuse of poor health as the reason preventing her from taking a proper leave. Vladimir is in a daze, unable to understand why Zinaida would ruin herself on someone unavailable like his father. He recalls Dr. Looshin's words about sacrificing oneself being the height of bliss for some people. Vladimir sees Zinaida in the window and is unable to leave without a final goodbye. Princess Zasyekin remarks that Vladimir's people are off in a terrible hurry, and Vladimir is relieved that she does not know about his father and her daughter. Zinaida comes in and chides Vladimir for his ease in deserting her. Vladimir says he has come to take his final goodbye. Zinaida admits that she has sometimes tortured Vladimir, but she assures him that she is not like he imagines her to be since she knows that he has a low opinion of her. Vladimir assures her that he will always love and adore her. Zinaida passionately kisses Vladimir who thinks "God only knows for whom that farewell kiss was seeking", but Vladimir enjoys it immensely. Zinaida and Vladimir separate, and Vladimir's family moves back to town. Vladimir's father grows in his son's eyes, and Vladimir has no ill will against his father. Vladimir is happy to encounter Dr. Looshin one day. Dr. Looshin asks if Vladimir is working and tells Vladimir not to be discouraged because the "main thing is to live a normal life and not to be carried away." He also tells Vladimir that Byelovzorov disappeared, and rumors claim that he went off to the Caucasus. Dr. Looshin claims that Byelovzorov's reaction is a lesson about not knowing how to break out of a net in time. Though Vladimir seems to have escaped unscathed, he must mind not to get caught again. Vladimir thinks that he will not get caught again because he will never see her again, but Vladimir is destined to see Zinaida once more.

Section 14: Chapter 20 Analysis

Mme. Petrovich's decision to move back to Moscow immediately is obviously an effort to separate her husband from Zinaida. Pyotr's talk with her does not change the plans, but he does convince her not to make their situation into a public scandal, saving them some embarrassment. M. Petrovich's threats against Count Malevsky returning to his home demonstrates that Pyotr Petrovich suspects Count Malevsky of sending the anonymous letter to Mme. Petrovich to acquaint her with her husband's affair. Vladimir is confused and shocked in the midst of all of the planning, especially because he cannot understand why Zinaida would ruin herself for a married man, showing his naivete and the fact that he does not understand love. Vladimir's love for Zinaida prevents him from being able to leave without taking a final farewell during which



Zinaida promises that she is not as bad as he thinks, though she admits that she has done some horrible things to Vladimir; Vladimir promises his love and devotion. Oddly, Vladimir sees his father as even more impressive because of his affair with Zinaida. Dr. Looshin's story about Byelovzorov and warning to Vladimir about knowing how to break out of a net in time foreshadows the lack of love in the remainder of Vladimir's life. At the end of the twentieth chapter, Vladimir mentions that he is destined to see Zinaida one more time, foreshadowing the last time that he sees her.



Section 15: Chapter 21 and Chapter 22

Section 15: Chapter 21 and Chapter 22 Summary

In Chapter 21, M. Petrovich goes riding everyday on his horse, Electric. One day, he comes to his son in a good mood for the first time in a long time, and Vladimir begs to ride with his father. The pair set off and ride through all of the avenues. Vladimir thinks they are heading home because his father notes that Vladimir's horse is tired, but his father stops on a bank of the Crimean Ford, hands his bridle to Vladimir to hold and tells Vladimir to wait. Vladimir waits for a long time and gets bored. A night watchman bothers Vladimir, and Vladimir walks toward where his father went. He sees his father leaning into an open window and talking to a woman whom Vladimir recognizes as Zinaida. Vladimir is stunned; his first impulse is to run away, but he is gripped by a stronger emotion and stays to watch. M. Petrovich seems to insist on something to which Zinaida will not consent. Zinaida holds out her hand, and M. Petrovich slaps her arm with his riding crop. Vladimir nearly cries as Zinaida kisses the wound. M. Petrovich throws his crop and breaks into the house. Zinaida turns away from the window, stretches out her arms and moves away from the window. Horrified, Vladimir runs back to the spot where his father left him. He is unable to grasp his father's cruelty and realizes he will always recall Zinaida's look and smile at that moment. Vladimir cries as he thinks that Zinaida is being beaten. M. Petrovich reappears and demands his horse. When he notes that his crop is gone, Vladimir asks where it is, and his father admits that he threw it away. M. Petrovich grows pensive and drops his head, allowing Vladimir to see for the first time how much tenderness and passion his father's stern features can express. M. Petrovich gallops away, and Vladimir is unable to catch up. Vladimir thinks "this is love" and passion but cannot understand letting even someone he loves strike him like that. In the past month, Vladimir has grown older and his love seems childish and puny. That night, Vladimir dreams of his father whipping Zinaida. Vladimir enters the University two months later, and his parents move to St. Petersburg with him. Six months after that, M. Petrovich dies of a stroke several days after receiving a letter from Moscow which upsets him. M. Petrovich begs and weeps for a favor from his wife. On the morning of his death, M. Petrovich begins a letter to his son warning him of the love of women, ecstasy and their poison. After M. Petrovich's death, Mme. Petrovich sends a considerable sum to Moscow.

In the twenty-second chapter, Vladimir finishes University three or four years later and spends his time in idleness. One evening, Vladimir meets Maidanov in the theatre, and Maidanov tells Vladimir that Madame Dolsky, the former young Princess Zasyekin that they were all in love with, is here. She is in St. Petersburg before she goes abroad. Maidanov claims that Zinaida's husband is a very nice, affluent man. It was hard for Zinaida to find a suitable husband after "that episode," but anything is possible with her brains. Maidanov suggests that Vladimir visit Zinaida who is lovelier than ever. Vladimir plans to visit Zinaida the next day, but circumstances prevent him for a week. When Vladimir finally visits Zinaida, he learns that she died four days earlier in childbirth. Vladimir feels a stab in his heart as he thinks about the final goal towards which the



glitter, ardor and excitement of Zinaida's young life hurried toward. Vladimir conjures an image of Zinaida lying in a narrow box, perhaps only a few steps from where his father lies. Vladimir rails against the enchantments and elation of youth. Vladimir does himself an injustice because even in the light-hearted days of his youth, he did not close his eyes to the mournful voice that called to him from beyond the grave. Several days after learning of Zinaida's death, Vladimir is present at the death of a poor old woman who lives in the same house as him. Although the woman's life was a struggle, she staved death off for as long as possible. At the deathbed of the old woman, Vladimir grows afraid for Zinaida and wants to say a prayer for Zinaida, his father and himself.

Section 15: Chapter 21 and Chapter 22 Analysis

The discovery that M. Petrovich rides everyday and comes home in a good mood one day, which happens to be the day that he discovers where Zinaida is, suggests that he has been searching for her and that this is the day that he learns her location. Pyotr Petrovich leaves his son in charge of his horse while he takes a walk. The night watchman bothering Vladimir serves as a catalyst for Vladimir following in the direction his father walked. Vladimir is stunned when he sees his father talking to Zinaida through a window. Zinaida seems to be resisting Pyotr's suggestions, but she shows how much she loves Vladimir's father when she kisses the wound he gives her when he whips her with his riding crop. Vladimir is disturbed by this sight and rushes back to the spot where his father left him, demonstrating his fear of his father. Vladimir questions his father about the riding crop, causing his father to show his love for Zinaida when Vladimir sees for the first time how much tenderness and passion his father's stern features could express. Vladimir admits that his love was childish, but he grows up. Vladimir finally goes to University, and his parents move to St. Petersburg with him; this seems odd since his family is not particularly close. The letter from Moscow suggests that Princess Zasyekin or Zinaida write to Pyotr Petrovich. The fact that Mme. Petrovich sends a large sum of money to Moscow after her husband's death insinuates that the favor her husband asked was to send money to Zinaida in response to the letter. The letter that Pyotr Petrovich begins to his son warns Vladimir of the love of women, ecstasy and their poison, suggesting that his passion injured him. When Vladimir encounters Maidanov, Maidanov mentions Madame Dolsky, the former Princess Zinaida Zasyekin, is in town and suggests that Vladimir go to see her; this foreshadows Vladimir's decision to go see Zinaida. Unfortunately, by the time that Vladimir makes it to Zinaida's hotel, she has already died in childbirth. Vladimir's love for Zinaida is evident in his pain at the news of her death, and yet, he thinks that perhaps she lies only a few steps from his father, yielding his lesser love to his father's greater one. Even in his carefree youth, Vladimir does not close his eyes to the mournful voice that calls to him from beyond the grave. The final part of the narrative recounts Vladimir's presence at the death of a poor, old woman who staves off death for as long as possible despite her many hardships; this death makes Vladimir want to say a prayer for Zinaida, his father and himself. This suggests that the old woman was willing to suffer hardships and still fight to live while Zinaida and Pyotr Petrovich were not. The fact that Vladimir includes himself in the prayer suggests that he suspects that he may give himself over to mourning; perhaps this prayer saves him from doing so.



Characters

Vladimir Petrovich appears in First Love

Vladimir Petrovich is the protagonist of Ivan Turgenev's "First Love." He is one of the remaining guests in the frame story when the host suggests that they all tell the stories of their first loves. Vladimir does not want to tell the story but agrees to write it down and read it for his friends a few weeks later. In the narrative that he recalls, Vladimir Petrovich is sixteen years old during the summer of 1833. He lives in Moscow with his parents, but his family leases a summer house near the Kaluga Toll-gate, in Keskootchy. Vladimir is preparing for University but has his freedom since his last tutor quit. He has an uncomfortable relationship with his parents; Vladimir's mother scarcely notices him, and his father treats him with a good-humored indifference. At this point in Vladimir's life, he does not have a clear image of women or love, but that changes when he meets the neighbor's daughter, Zinaida Zasyekin.

Vladimir first sees Zinaida in the garden and runs blushing to his room after his spying is discovered. When his mother sends him to Princess Zasyekin's lodge, he becomes a constant visitor to Zinaida. Vladimir quickly falls in love with Zinaida who torments him by being kind at times and completely ignoring him at other times. After Zinaida changes a lot over a week, Vladimir realizes that she has fallen in love, and he ponders whom she loves. After Zinaida tells Vladimir that she wants him to love her as a friend but not as before, she appoints him her page. Count Malevsky chides Vladimir for being a bad page and suggests that the boy watch the garden to learn who Zinaida is in love with. Vladimir sees his father in the garden but does not ponder the subject. After Mme. Petrovich learns of her husband's affair with Zinaida and decides to move back to Moscow immediately, Vladimir takes his leave of Zinaida, assuring her of his everlasting love and devotion. Several years later, after Vladimir has graduated from University, he learns that Zinaida is in St. Petersburg, but it takes a week for him to visit her upon which he learns that she died four days earlier during childbirth. Vladimir is struck with the need to offer a prayer for Zinaida, his father and himself.

Princess Zinaida Zasyekin appears in First Love

Princess Zinaida Zasyekin is the twenty-one year old daughter of the elderly Princess Zasyekin who rents the decrepit lodge in Keskootchy, located next door to the Petrovichs' summer house. Zinaida has many admirers: Byelovzorov, Dr. Looshin, Count Malevsky, Captain Nirmatsky and Maidanov. Zinaida has a graceful figure and a lovely face. Her arms are beautiful, and her hair is fair. Zinaida's eyes are large, grey and perceptive. She is joyful, and her movements are enchanting, imperious and caressing. She is always laughing, and Vladimir finds her enchanting. Zinaida befriends Vladimir Petrovich though he is five years younger than her. She realizes that Vladimir is in love with her and teases him mercilessly.



Princess Zinaida Zasyekin is haughty and cold when she visits the Petrovichs' house, but she is warm and charming when Vladimir visits her at the lodge. Byelovzorov brings a tabby kitten to Zinaida because she mentions that she wants one, and Zinaida also asks for a horse because she wants to go riding with Pyotr Petrovich, Vladimir's father. Zinaida changes throughout the book, and Vladimir realizes these changes are due to Zinaida being in love. Zinaida is sad and tells Vladimir that she wishes herself on the other side of the world. Zinaida tells Vladimir, who she sees as a child, that she loves him and wants him to love her as a friend but not as before. She appoints him as her page. Zinaida has an affair with Pyotr Petrovich whom she is in love with. When Vladimir takes his leave of Zinaida after Mme. Petrovich learns about the affair, Zinaida pleads with him to believe that she is not as bad as he thinks she is. Zinaida dies in St. Petersburg during childbirth several years later.

Pyotr Petrovich appears in First Love

Pyotr Petrovich is Vladimir's father. He is younger than his wife whom he did not marry for love. He is coldly affectionate toward his son most of the time. Pyotr has an affair with Princess Zinaida Zasyekin in Keskootchny during the summer of 1833. He dies of a stroke six months after his son enters college, but the morning before his death, he begins a letter to Vladimir, warning his son away from women and their poison.

Mme. Petrovich appears in First Love

Mme. Petrovich is Vladimir's mother. She is older than her husband and always secretly agitated. She disapproves of Zinaida and Princess Zasyekin. An anonymous letter alerts Mme. Petrovich to her husband's affair with Zinaida, and she insists upon returning to Moscow immediately; however, her husband convinces her to refrain from making his affair a public scandal.

Princess Zasyekin appears in First Love

Princess Zasyekin is the elderly princess who rents the decrepit lodge next door to the Petrovichs' summer home. She is Zinaida's mother. Princess Zasyekin is poor and asks Mme. Petrovich for protection.

Byelovzorov appears in First Love

Byelovzorov is one of Zinaida's admirers. He is a blond, curly-haired young officer. He has a magnificent figure with a pink face and protruding eyes. Byelovzorov gives Zinaida a tabby kitten because she wants one and her word is law. Vladimir is jealous of Byelovzorov whom Zinaida calls "my wild beast, or sometimes simply mine." Byelovzorov would gladly leap into a fire for Zinaida. He has no confidence in his brains or other qualities, but he constantly proposes marriage to Zinaida, implying that the



others only talk. After Zinaida's affair with Pyotr Petrovich becomes known, Byelovzorov disappears, supposedly to the Caucasus.

Dr. Looshin appears in First Love

Dr. Looshin is one of Zinaida's admirers. He is a swarthy man who yells at Vladimir for looking at Zinaida in the garden. He has close cropped dark hair, and he is very cynical and sarcastic. Dr. Looshin knows and loves Zinaida best of her admirers, but he attacks her to her face and behind her back. Zinaida respects Dr. Looshin, though she takes a malicious pleasure in asserting her complete power over him.

Count Malevsky appears in First Love

Count Malevsky is one of Zinaida's admirers. He is very handsome with dark hair, expressive brown eyes, a small narrow nose and a thin mustache over a tiny mouth. He has a slight Polish accent and is always fashionably dressed. Count Malevsky is clever and shrewd, but he is also sneaky and rude at times. Pyotr Petrovich kicks him out of his house after Mme. Petrovich learns of Pyotr's affair with Zinaida through an anonymous letter; this suggests that Pyotr believes Count Malevsky wrote the letter.

Captain Nirmatsky appears in First Love

Captain Nirmatsky is one of Zinaida's admirers. He is a retired man of about forty years old who is hideously pockmarked with curly hair. He has slightly bowed legs and wears a military tunic unbuttoned and with epaulets.

Maidanov appears in First Love

Maidanov is one of Zinaida's admirers. He is a tall, young man with a thick face, small eyes and extremely long, black hair. He is responsive to the poetic strain in Zinaida's soul, though he is somewhat cold by nature. He fervently assures Zinaida that he adores her and composes endless verses in her honor which he recites with an affected, sincere ardor.

Volodya appears in First Love

Volodya is Zinaida's younger brother. He is twelve years old and a cadet. When he visits Zinaida and Princess Zasyekin on a break from school, Zinaida convinces Vladimir to play with Volodya.



Vonifaty appears in First Love

Vonifaty is Princess Zasyekin's insolent servant.

Fyodor appears in First Love

Fyodor is the Petrovichs' footman. He continually tells Vladimir when Mme. Petrovich is angry.

Sergey Nicolayevich appears in First Love

In the frame story, Sergey Nicolayevich is one of the remaining guests who agrees to the host's plan to tell stories of their first loves; however, Sergey claims that he had no first love because he began courting a girl for the first time as though it was nothing new to him.

Host appears in First Love

In the frame story, the host suggests that he, Sergey Nicolayevich and Vladimir Petrovich tell the stories of their first loves. He does not have a story to tell because he did not fall in love until he met his current wife.



Objects/Places

Neskootchny appears in First Love

Neskootchny is the main setting of the novel. It is the place in the country where Vladimir's family and Zinaida's mother take homes for the summer.

Vladimir's Country House appears in First Love

Vladimir's country house is located in Neskootchny, next door to Princess Zasyekin's lodge, and is the location where Vladimir lives during the time detailed in the narrative of his friendship with Zinaida.

Lodge appears in First Love

In Neskootchy, there is a lodge next door to the Petrovichs' country home which Princess Zasyekin leases. This is where Vladimir begins and develops his relationship with Zinaida mostly.

Garden appears in First Love

In Neskootchny, there is a garden near Vladimir's country house and Princess Zasyekin's lodge. Vladimir walks in this garden a lot, and this is where he first sees Zinaida. Vladimir and Zinaida spend a lot of time together in the garden.

Greenhouse appears in First Love

Vladimir likes to sit on the roof of the greenhouse and look at Zinaida's window. He jumps from the roof when Zinaida suggests he prove his love.

Penknife appears in First Love

At Count Malevsky's suggestion that Zinaida will be in the garden with her beloved, Vladimir pockets his penknife and plans to ambush Zinaida's supposed lover. When Vladimir sees his father in the garden, he drops the penknife, but he recovers it the next day while he is playing in the garden with Zinaida's younger brother.

Analogies appears in First Love

Analogies is a game that Zinaida invents where a person names an object and Zinaida's admirers compete to come up with the best analogy.



Forfeits appears in First Love

Forfeits is a game that Zinaida and her admirers frequently play. They are playing forfeits when Vladimir visits the lodge for the first time.

Poetry appears in First Love

Poetry plays a major part in this novel. Maidanov is a poet and writes "The Murderers." Vladimir often reads poetry, and Zinaida likes for him to read poetry to her.

Kitten appears in First Love

Byelovzorov brings a tabby kitten to Zinaida the first time that Vladimir visits the lodge because Zinaida claimed to want one the day before and her word is law.

Horse appears in First Love

Zinaida asks Byelovzorov for a horse because she wants to ride with Pyotr Petrovich.

Vladimir's Relationship with his Father appears in First Love

Vladimir has an odd relationship with his father. Vladimir greatly admires his father who treats him with good-humored indifference.

Furniture appears in First Love

Princess Zasyekin has extremely shabby furniture in the lodge which shows her poverty.

Affair appears in First Love

Pyotr Petrovich has an affair with Zinaida Zasyekin. Mme. Petrovich is furious when an anonymous letter acquaints her with her husband's affair, but she agrees not to allow it to become a public scandal.

Riding Crop appears in First Love

Pyotr Petrovich hits Zinaida's arm with his riding crop during a horseback ride with his son after their return to Moscow. Zinaida kisses the scar, and Pyotr throws the crop aside, leaving it to enter Zinaida's home.



Zinaida's Story appears in First Love

When Zinaida suggests that she and her admirers tell stories, she begins with a story about a queen who holds a ball for all of her admirers. The queen looks out the window at the fountain in the garden and thinks about her beloved, who has enslaved her and to whom she will go later.

Moscow appears in First Love

Moscow is the city where Vladimir and his family live and to which they return after Mme. Petrovich learns of her husband's affair with Zinaida.

Anonymous Letter appears in First Love

An anonymous letter alerts Mme. Petrovich to her husband's affair with Zinaida Zasyekin. Later that night, Pyotr Petrovich throws Count Malevsky out of his house, suggesting that Count Malevsky is the one who informs Mme. Petrovich.

Othello appears in First Love

Vladimir refers to himself as Othello in allusion to his jealousy of Zinaida and his intent to ambush her lover.

St. Petersburg appears in First Love

Vladimir goes to college in St. Petersburg, and his parents move there with him. Pyotr Petrovich dies in St. Petersburg six months after his son starts college. After Vladimir graduates University, Maidanov tells Vladimir that Zinaida is in St. Petersburg before going abroad. This is where Zinaida dies during childbirth.



Themes

Love

The main theme in "First Love" is the theme of love. The frame story that opens the novel begins with the host suggesting that he and his two remaining guests tell stories about their first love. Sergey Nicolayevich claims that he did not have a first love; he began courting a woman for the first time as though it were nothing new. The host states that he was never in love until he met his current wife. Vladimir Petrovich states that his first love was a very unusual circumstance and then begs to return at a later date after being given time to write down the details of his first love.

In the narrative that Vladimir tells, Vladimir is very young and knows nothing about love. When he meets Zinaida, he is struck with her beauty and grace. The only name he can give the new emotions swelling in his heart is "Zinaida." Byelovzorov, Count Malevsky, Dr. Looshin, Maidanov and Captain Nirmatsky admire and love Zinaida, especially Dr. Looshin and Byelovzorov. Zinaida loves Pyotr Petrovich, with whom she has an affair; he loves her as well. Vladimir mentions that his father did not marry his mother for love, suggesting that he married her for money. Zinaida's story about the queen's ball for her admirers suggests that Zinaida is in love with someone besides her admirers, which later is revealed to be Pyotr Petrovich. Zinaida claims that she is heartless and cannot fall in love. Vladimir loves Zinaida and is jealous of her other admirers, especially when he begins to suspect that she is in love with someone else.

After Vladimir learns that his father is having an affair with Zinaida, he takes his final leave, swearing his love and devotion to Zinaida. When Vladimir sees Zinaida kiss the scar on her arm from Pyotr Petrovich whipping her with a riding crop, he thinks "so this is love" though he cannot imagine letting someone, even someone he loves, hurt him like that. Pyotr Petrovich receives a letter from Moscow and begs his wife for a favor which she denies, and he dies several days later after beginning a letter to his son warning Vladimir against women, love and their poison. Four years later, Vladimir finishes University and learns that Zinaida is in St. Petersburg, but by the time he manages to visit her, she is already dead. Vladimir despairs that he did not get to see Zinaida one last time.

Class & Wealth

One of the prominent themes in "First Love" by Ivan Turgenev is class and wealth. Although Princess Zasyekin and her daughter, Zinaida, are titled, they are very poor, as evidenced by the fact that they inhabit the decrepit lodge next door to the Petrovichs' summer lodge in Keskootchny. The fact that Vladimir claims that his father did not marry his mother for love seems to suggest that he married her for money. Mme. Petrovich objects to associating with Princess Zasyekin, specifically objecting to the idea that the princess might ask to borrow money from her. Also, Mme. Petrovich objects to Vladimir



spending so much time with Zinaida because she does not think the Zasyekins are socially acceptable company for her son.

After the discovery of Pyotr Petrovich's affair with Zinaida, it is difficult for Zinaida to marry anyone due to the scandal of her having an affair with a married man, as Vladimir learns several years later when he runs into Maidanov. Before Pyotr Petrovich dies, he receives a letter from Moscow and asks his wife for a favor which she denies. After his death, Mme. Petrovich sends a very large amount of money to Moscow, presumably to aid Zinaida in marriage. Eventually, Zinaida marries a very nice, financially well-off man.

People Changing

One of the recurring themes in "First Love" is people changing. The largest change that occurs in the novel is in Vladimir; he changes greatly because of his love for Zinaida since it is the first time that he falls in love with someone. He also changes after he learns of his father's affair with Zinaida. Zinaida changes during her affair with Pyotr Petrovich, becoming quieter and more subdued. During Zinaida's affair, Count Malevsky becomes more malicious which results in him falling out of favor with Zinaida. Dr. Looshing becomes more sullen during Zinaida's affair, and Byelovzorov also becomes more sullen, eventually fleeing to the Caucasus after Zinaida's affair becomes common knowledge.

As a result of learning about Zinaida's affair with his father, Vladimir becomes more studious and never loves again. While on a horseback ride with his father, Vladimir sees his father whip Zinaida's arm with a riding crop; afterward, he sees for the first time the tenderness that his father's stern features are capable of expressing. Eventually, Zinaida marries before she dies during childbirth, a great change from the initial introduction to the carefree twenty-one year old girl that Vladimir sees across the garden gate in Keskootchny.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of "First Love" is third person in the frame story, but it is first person in the narrative that Vladimir Petrovich tells about his first love. The first person point of view of the narrative is limited and somewhat reliable. The fact that the point of view is limited can be seen by the fact that Vladimir can only tell his listeners about his own thoughts and feelings and the things that he observes. The reliability of the point of view is complex as Vladimir can only report upon what he knows at the time. While something may appear to be a certain way at one point in the narrative, Vladimir may reveal it to be different later when he learns the truth of the matter.

The point of view is important to this novel since the narrative is being told to recall Vladimir's first love, making his feelings and thoughts very important. The story is told mostly through exposition, but there is a significant amount of dialogue present as well. This method is likely used to keep the reader focused on Vladimir and his observations. Throughout the novel, the events are seen through Vladimir's point of view, though he does note other characters' reactions and observations at several points in the narrative.

Setting

The novel is set in the nineteenth century in Moscow and Keskootchy in Russia. The novel has been translated into English but was originally written in Russian by Ivan Turgenev. Everyone speaks Russian, but the ability to speak additional languages is an indication of a higher social status; for example, Mme. Petrovich is able to speak and write French as well as Russian, though her Russian spelling is not accurate. The primary setting of the novel is Keskootchny where the Petrovichs rent a summer house and Princess Zasyekin rents the decrepit lodge next door. This is where Vladimir Petrovich first meets Princess Zinaida Zasyekin. Their friendship develops while they are both staying in Keskootchny. A lot of their interactions occur at the lodge that the Zasyekins rent and in the garden that separates the house. Additionally, Vladimir spends a lot of time on the roof of the greenhouse, spying on Zinaida through her window. Keskootchny is also the location where Zinaida and Pyotr Petrovich's affair occurs.

The setting of the frame story occurs in the host's house where the host, Vladimir and Sergey Nicolayevich decide to tell stories about their first loves. This is the actual physical setting of the novel since the narrative about Vladimir and Zinaida is actually a recollection so the settings are figurative rather than literal. After Mme. Petrovich learns about her husband's affair with Zinaida, the Petrovichs return to Moscow which is where they usually reside. Zinaida and her mother also return to Moscow as is seen when Vladimir takes a ride with his father and sees his father beat Zinaida with a riding crop.



Vladimir attends University in St. Petersburg, and his family moves there with him. Pyotr Petrovich dies six months after Vladimir begins University, and Zinaida dies during childbirth four years later.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is casual and informal. The sentences are constructed in a grammatically correct manner, yet retain a casual tone. The style of the novel does not hinder the reader's comprehension of the novel. In fact, the language is more likely to identify the characters' identities and separate them into individuals. The language also indicates social status and helps to identify the relationships between characters in the novel.

The language of the novel characterizes the different cultures, social classes and characters in the novel. The majority of the novel is told through exposition, but there is plenty of dialogue to distinguish the different characters. A short amount of time passes during the entire novel, and the short chapters offer very short amounts of time as well. The overall effect of the language is very easy to understand and distinguishes characters and social classes in the novel quite well.

Structure

This novel is comprised of twenty-one chapters with a frame story, and there are one hundred and seven pages. Each chapter is between two and eight pages, averaging around five pages per chapter. The chapters are not named, but they are numbered. The chapters are very short but descriptive. The majority of the narrative spans one summer, with the last couple of chapters skipping through time and covering short amounts of time at future times in Vladimir's life.

The plot of the novel is simple with no subplots. The novel is about Vladimir Petrovich falling in love for the first time with Princess Zinaida Zasyekin, his neighbor at his family's summer house in Keskootchny. Zinaida has many admirers, but she falls in love with someone else. Vladimir ponders her being in love with someone else and eventually learns that she is having an affair with his father, Pyotr Petrovich. After Vladimir's mother discovers the affair, the Petrovichs return to Moscow. Vladimir goes to University, and his father dies only six months into Vladimir's schooling. After Vladimir graduates, he learns that Zinaida is in St. Petersburg and goes to see her a week later, but he arrives too late; Zinaida has died, four days earlier during childbirth.

The novel's pace is quick due to the short, descriptive chapters. The novel is easy to read, and the plot is engrossing. A frame story opens the novel, and the entire narrative is a flashback as Vladimir Petrovich recalls his first love. The novel is easy to read and very entertaining.



Quotes

"In my case there was no first love. I began with the second... Oh, it's quite simple. I was eighteen when I first began to court a very charming young girl, but I did this as if it was nothing new to me, exactly as I later flirted with others. Actually I fell in love for the first and last time when I was about six, with my nurse, but that was a very long time ago. I do not now remember the details of our relationship—and even if I did, how could they possibly interest anyone?" Sergey Nicolayevich, Prologue, p. 21.

"I remember that at that time the image of woman, the shadowy vision of feminine love, scarcely ever took definite shape in my mind: but in every thought, in every sensation, there lay hidden a half-conscious, shy, timid awareness of something new, inexpressibly sweet, feminine... This presentiment, this sense of expectancy, penetrated my whole being; I breathed it, it was in every drop of blood that flowed through my veins—soon it was to be fulfilled." Vladimir, Chapter I, p. 24.

"There was in the girl's movements something so enchanting, imperious and caressing, so mocking and charming, that I nearly cried out with wonder and delight... I forgot everything; my eyes devoured the graceful figure, the lovely neck, the beautiful arms, the slightly disheveled fair hair under the white kerchief—and the half-closed, perceptive eye, the lashes, the soft cheek beneath them..." Vladimir, Chapter 2, p. 26 .

"How queer that children, that young gentlemen do not say straight out what they feel. That is all very well for grown-ups." Zinaida, Chapter 4, p. 32.

"I gazed at her, and how dear she already was to me, and how near. It seemed to me that I had known her for a long time, and that before I had known nothing and had not lived." Vladimir, Chapter 4, p. 33 .

"I think you said you had asked the daughter too? Somebody was telling me that she is a very charming and cultivated girl." Pyotr Petrovich, Chapter 5, p. 38.

"Time was... but it is over, and here I am, a princess, a title's no good without any food!" Princess Zasyekin, Chapter 6, p. 41.

"What I felt was so new, so sweet. I sat quite still, hardly looking round, and breathing



very slowly; only from time to time I laughed silently at some memory, or grew cold at the thought that I was in love—it was here—this was love." Vladimir, Chapter 7, p. 47.

"Oh, gentle feelings, soft sounds, the goodness and the gradual stilling of a soul that has been moved; the melting happiness of the first tender, touching joys of love—where are you? Where are you?" Vladimir, Chapter 7, p. 48.

"All the same, they are not at all *comme il faut*, and I wish you would not waste your time in such company, instead of doing some work for your examination." Mme. Petrovich, Chapter 8, p. 49.

"Take what you can yourself, and don't let others get you into their hands; to belong to oneself, that is the whole thing in life." Pyotr Petrovich, Chapter 8, p. 50.

"Liberty. Do you know what really makes a man free? Will, your own will, and it gives power which is better than liberty. Know how to want, and you'll be free, and you'll be master too." Pyotr Petrovich, Chapter 8, p. 50.

"I am a flirt: I have no heart: I have an actor's nature." Zinaida, Chapter 9, p. 54.

"No! I cannot love people whom I find that I look down on. I need someone who would himself master me, but then, goodness me, I shall never come across anyone like that. I will never fall into anybody's clutches, never, never." Zinaida, Chapter 9, p. 55.

"Every one of her words pierced my heart like a knife. At that moment I would, I think, gladly have given up my life if only that could end her grief." Vladimir, Chapter 9, p. 58.

"That is what poetry can do. It speaks to us of what does not exist, which is not only better than what exists, but even more like the truth." Zinaida, Chapter 9, p. 58.

"At your age that is natural enough, but your choice isn't very fortunate. Can't you see what sort of house this is?... Don't understand? So much the worse for you. I consider it my duty to warn you. It is all very well for people like me—for old bachelors—to go on coming here. What could possibly happen to us? We are a hardboiled lot; you cannot do much to us. But you have a tender skin. The atmosphere isn't healthy for you here. Believe me, you might become infected...Whatever is in your heart is still written all over your face. But anyway, what is the good of talking? I shouldn't be coming here myself if—if I were not just as mad myself. Only what does astonish me is this; how can you with your intelligence not see what is going on round you?... I repeat, the atmosphere here is



bad for you. You like it here—well, what of it? Hothouses smell sweet too, but one can't live in them. Take my advice and go back to Kaidanov again." Doctor Looshin, Chapter 10, pp. 60-61.

"Caprice and independence, the whole of you is contained in these two words. Your entire nature is conveyed by them." Doctor Looshin, Chapter 10, p. 62.

"My darling boy. How could you do it? How could you listen to me? When you know I love you... Oh, please stand up." Zinaida, Chapter 12, p. 67.

"Well, freedom to the free, heaven for the holy." Zinaida, Chapter 13, p. 70.

"And I, like a fool, thought that she was a flirt! Evidently to sacrifice oneself is the height of bliss—for some people!" Doctor Looshin, Chapter 15, p. 74.

"Her very walk seemed gentler, her whole figure more stately and more graceful. Great Heavens! With what fresh force my love flamed up within me!" Vladimir, Chapter 15, p. 77.

"'I should pursue and catch her and still kill her.' 'I see. And supposing that I were your wife, what would you do then?' 'I should kill myself.'" Byelovzorov and Zinaida, Chapter 16, p. 78.

"Pages ought never to leave their mistresses' side: pages should know everything their mistresses do; indeed they should watch them day and night... Day—and night. In the daytime it doesn't perhaps matter quite so much: it is light and there are lots of people about. But night—that's when anything may happen. My advice to you is not to sleep at night, but keep watch—watch with all your might: remember the garden—at night—near the fountain—that is where you must watch. You'll thank me for this yet." Count Malevsky, Chapter 17, p. 85.

"Jealous Othello, ready for murder, was suddenly transformed into a schoolboy..." Vladimir, Chapter 17, p. 88.

"I know everything; why did you play with me? What need had you of my love?" Vladimir, Chapter 18, p. 91.

"I am guilty before you, Volodya. Oh, I am terribly guilty. There is so much in me that is



dark, evil, wicked... but now I am not playing with you—I love you—and you haven't an inkling why and how much I love you." Zinaida, Chapter 18, p. 91.

"I didn't want to know whether I was loved, and I didn't want to admit to myself that I was not." Vladimir, Chapter 19, p. 92.

"I did not sob; I did not give myself up to despair; I did not ask myself where and how all this had happened; I did not wonder how it was that I had not guessed it earlier—guessed it long ago. I did not even harbour bitter thoughts about my father... what I had learned was too much for me to manage. The sudden revelation crushed me; all was ended. In one swoop all my flowers were torn up by the roots and lay about me—scattered, broken, trampled underfoot." Vladimir, Chapter 19, pp. 93-94.

"How could she—a young girl and a princess—have brought herself to do such a thing, when she knew that my father was not free, and she could after all have married, say, Byelovzorov? What did she hope for, was she not frightened of ruining her whole future? Yes, I thought, this is it—this is love; this is passion; this is devotion. And I remembered Looshin's words: 'To sacrifice oneself is the height of bliss—for some people.'" Vladimir, Chapter 20, p. 95.

"You must not think too ill of me. I have sometimes tortured you; but still I am not what you imagine me to be... Really, I am not like that. I know that you have a low view of me." Zinaida, Chapter 20, p. 96.

"Believe me, Zinaida Alexandrovna, that whatever you did, however much you make me suffer, I shall love you and adore you to the end of my days." Vladimir, Chapter 20, p. 96.

"I cannot even begin to convey the feelings with which I left her. I never wish to experience them again, but I should count it a misfortune never to have had them at all." Vladimir, Chapter 20, p. 97.

"The main thing is to live a normal life and not to be carried away. Otherwise, what's the use? Wherever the wave may carry you, it will always turn out badly. Better a rock to stand on, so long as it's on one's own feet." Doctor Looshin, Chapter 20, p. 97.

"Yes, this is love... This is passion. And yet how could one fail to feel the most furious resentment, how could one bear to be struck by any hand, however dear—and yet, it seems, one can, if one is in love, and I—I imagined..." Vladimir, Chapter 21, p. 102.



"My son, beware of the love of women; beware of that ecstasy—that slow poison." Pyotr Petrovich, Chapter 21, p. 103.

"I felt a sudden stab at my heart. The thought that I could have seen her, and did not, and would never see her again—this bitter thought buried itself in me with all the force of an unanswerable reproach." Vladimir, Chapter 22, pp. 104-105.

"O youth! Youth! You go your way heedless, uncaring—as if you owned all the treasures of the world; even grief elates you, even sorrow sits well upon your brow. You are self-confident and insolent and you say, 'I alone am alive—behold!' even while your own days fly past and vanish without trace and without number, and everything within you melts away like wax in the sun... like snow... and perhaps the whole secret of your enchantment lies not, indeed, in your power to do whatever you may will, but in your power to think that there is nothing you will not do: it is this that you scatter to the winds—gifts which you could never have used to any other purpose. Each of us feels most deeply convinced that he has been too prodigal of his gifts—that he has a right to cry 'Oh, what could I not have done, if only I had not wasted my time.' And here am I... what did I hope—what did I expect? What rich promise did the future seem to hold out to me, when with scarcely a sigh—only a bleak sense of utter desolation—I took my leave from the brief phantom, risen for a fleeting instant, of my first love?" Vladimir, Chapter 22, pp. 105-106.

"I remember how several days after that on which I had learnt of Zinaida's death, I myself, obeying an irresistible impulse, was present at the death of a poor old woman who lived in the same house with us. Covered with rags, lying on bare boards, with a sack for a pillow, her end was hard and painful. Her whole life was spent in a bitter struggle with daily want, she had had no joy, had never tasted the sweets of happiness—surely she would welcome death with gladness—its deliverance—its peace? Yet so long as her frail body resisted obstinately, her breast rose and fell in agony under the icy hand that was laid upon it, so long as any strength was left within her, the little old woman kept crossing herself, kept whispering 'Lord forgive me my sins...' and not until the last spark of consciousness had gone, did the look of fear, of the terror of death, vanish from her eyes... and I remember that there, by the death-bed of that poor woman, I grew afraid, afraid for Zinaida, and I wanted to say a prayer for her, for my father—and for myself." Vladimir, Chapter 22, pp. 106-107.

Topics for Discussion

What is the purpose of the frame story in "First Love"?

Choose 2 of Zinaida's admirers to compare and contrast.

Describe Vladimir's family life.

How does Vladimir feel about Zinaida, and how does Zinaida feel about Vladimir?

What is the significance of the story that Zinaida makes up about the queen and her admirers?

Which of Zinaida's admirers do you believe is most devoted to her? Defend your choice.

Describe the relationship between Zinaida and Pyotr Petrovich.