One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich Study Guide

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

BOOKRAGS

Contents

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich Study Guide......1

Contents......2

Author Biography......3

Plot Summary......4

Characters......7

Themes......11

Style......13

Historical Context......15

Critical Overview......17

Criticism......18

Critical Essay #1......19

Critical Essay #2......22

Adaptations......27

Topics for Further Study......28

Compare and Contrast......29

What Do I Read Next?......30

Further Study......31

Bibliography......35

Copyright Information......36

Author Biography

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was born on December 11, 1918, in Kislovodsk, Russia. His father, an artillery officer in World War I, died in an accident before he was born, and his mother raised him on a secretary's salary. He studied mathematics at the University of Rostov and graduated in 1941, after having married fellow student Natalya Reshetovskaya in 1940. He became an artillery officer in the Soviet Army during World War II and was decorated twice for valor. However, in letters to a friend he criticized the dictator Josef Stalin, referring to him indirectly as "the whiskered one" or "the boss" in Yiddish. This led to his being stripped of his rank and medals and sentenced to a Moscow prison. He spent the last four years of his eightyear sentence at a forced-labor camp in Kazakhstan, where he conceived *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. During this period he also underwent a cancer operation and his wife was forced to divorce him. When he was finally freed, he was not allowed to return home, but instead was required to stay in Kazakhstan. He taught mathematics and wrote "underground," meaning he kept his writing a secret and hid the papers he wrote for fear of discovery by the KGB, the secret police.

Solzhenitsyn didn't expect his work to be published; he wrote because he had to tell the truth about life in the Soviet Union. However, in 1962, the political climate changed briefly. Premiere Nikita Khrushchev wanted to denounce his predecessor, Josef Stalin, so Solzhenitsyn exposed his underground book to the editors of *Novy Mir*,a liberal magazine. His novella was published, but it soon led to trouble for Solzhenitsyn. Khrushchev fell and the "Iron Curtain" of Soviet secrets shut tightly again. Solzhenitsyn then had to battle the Soviet Writers Union, an organization whose purpose was to publish only those writers who adhered to Socialist Realism, a style that supports and even glorifies the Communist party line. But the world had its glimpse of the real Soviet Union, thanks to Solzhenitsyn, and that vision would not fade; in fact, it would intensify. Although Solzhenitsyn's future writings weren't printed in Russia, they were published in the West.*One Day*, along with*The First Circle* and *Cancer Ward*, earned Solzhenitsyn the Nobel Prize in 1970.

In 1974, the KGB struck and Solzhenitsyn was exiled from Russia while in the process of publishing *The Gulag Archipelago*. He moved to Vermont in the United States with his second wife and children, where he stayed until the political climate changed again. The Soviet Union collapsed, and in 1994 Solzhenitsyn, who some consider to be the conscience of Russia, returned to his homeland.

Plot Summary

"Reveille was sounded, as always, at 5 A.M .... "

So begins another day for Ivan Denisovich in a forced labor camp in Siberia, in a pitch-dark room filled with two hundred men, stacked four bunks high. Usually he gets up and finds one of the numerous ways to earn more food, but this morning he's sick. Not sick enough to know he can't work, but sick enough to wonder if he can. He plans on going to the infirmary, but a mean guard, the thin Tartar, catches him in his bunk and sentences him to solitary confinement for three days. Fortunately for Ivan, he only has him mop the floor of the warders' office. Inside the warders check the thermometer. If it is lower than forty below zero, the men won't have to work outside. It registers sixteen degrees below, but the men know it isn't accurate and there's no talk of fixing it. Ivan does a poor job of mopping: "If you're working for human beings, then do a real job of it, but if you work for dopes, then you just go through the motions."

The beginning segment of the novel firmly establishes the prison setting, its unspoken laws, and the goal of the prisoners: to survive. Ivan recalls his former gang boss from another camp who told the men that even though jungle law reigns, certain behavior signals a non-survivor: "the guy who licks out bowls, puts his faith in the infirmary, or squeals to the screws." Another firmly established theme is Ivan's health. Because he starts the day not feeling well, he tracks his health for the rest of the day. His psychological health is closely tied to his physical health. For example, today is the day his gang finds out whether they are to be reassigned to build on an unsheltered area. Since fuel is such a valuable commodity, they won't be able to make a fire. This could spell death for many of the men who already live on the edge of life. Their gang boss is bribing the prison bosses to keep them off this assignment. Another undermining element is the bread ration. Ivan overhears that it's been cut today. Survival becomes a little more challenging.

After a breakfast of gruel and boiled fish bones, Ivan goes to the infirmary where Nikolay Semyonovich Vdovushkin, the supposed medic, is writing poetry. Vdovushkin takes Ivan's temperature. It's ninety-nine degrees, not high enough to be admitted, so Ivan is sent off to work. Besides, Vdovushkin's patron, the new doctor, Stepan Grigoryevich, believes work is the best cure. But Ivan knows even a horse can die from overwork.

Ivan returns to the barracks and receives his bread ration, which is short. He eats half, then hides the rest in his mattress, sewing it in, in case the guards check for hidden items. As Ivan's gang stands outside waiting to be searched, Caesar Markovich, the rich intellectual who receives two packages a month, is smoking. Both Ivan and the scrounger Fetyukov watch him, hoping he'll pass the butt their way. Ivan waits with a semblance of self-control while Fetyukov hovers around like a dog. Caesar gives the butt to Ivan. This is another rule of prison survival: don't lose your dignity. Ivan goes to get his identification tag, S-984, repainted on his cap, chest, knee, and back, and the

importance of dignity becomes clearer. The men's identities have been reduced to a letter and some numbers.

The feared Lieutenant Volkovoy supervises the frisk—despite the freezing cold—for nonregulation clothing or food, which might indicate an escape attempt. Captain Buynovsky, a newcomer, is caught with a jersey. He protests that this procedure violates Soviet law and is given ten days in solitary confinement. This means a hot meal only once every three days and a cut in bread rations and could easily mean death.

"The big, red sun,... was slanting through the wires of the gate ... "

As the gang heads to their old work place, thanks to the gang boss bribing their way out of the new and dreaded site, Ivan thinks of his wife and the kolkhoz or collective farm they lived on. She wants him to come back and paint carpets since most of the farmers are finding better incomes outside the farm. But, of course, he can't go home. He has been exiled from home.

When the gang arrives at the site to wait for their assignment, Ivan has a chance to think and observe his fellow gang members. He wonders how Aloysha the Baptist can survive on only the prison rations: religious faith is barely tolerated in the atheist Soviet Union. He likes the minorities and the cultural qualities they bring. He likes the deaf prisoner, Senka Klevshin, who has already survived Buchenwald as a prisoner of World War II. Because of Article 58 of the penal code, Klevshin was given a ten-year sentence for "allowing" himself to become a prisoner of war and, therefore, spying for the enemy. Finally the men's assignments come and the work begins.

Ivan is to work with another Ivan, the Latvian. Since the quantity of work they do is tied to their food rations, there is sufficient motivation. For most of the men, losing themselves in work is their best escape. Still, the mind can wander. Ivan recalls how he came to the camps. Like Senka Klevshin, he too was captured by the Germans, but he escaped to rejoin his regiment, violating Article 58. Only those who consistently won battles or who died evaded Article 58.

The men are so busy working that they are late for their lunch of groats. Their portions are always reduced by other prisoners, especially those in the kitchen. However, the gang boss and his assistant always get double portions. The clever Ivan shows Pavlo, the assistant boss, two extra portions he's managed to steal. Pavlo lets Ivan have one and shows his humanity by giving the Captain the other.

Ivan overhears a debate about art between Caesar and prisoner K-123. Caesar praises the Eisenstein film *Ivan the Terrible* for its artistic merits while K-123 criticizes any artist who bends himself to the political regime, in this case, Stalin's. All art is a sore point in the Soviet Union, where freedom is not a value. The prime value is following the Communist party line.

Before the men return to work, they listen to Tyurin tell his story of imprisonment. His father was a *kulak* who resisted the collective farms. Because of this Tyurin was dishonorably discharged from the army and eventually arrested. Before his arrest, he

took his younger brother to a street gang and asked them to show him how to survive. Even outside prison, the common Soviet citizen is forced to live like a criminal.

Tyurin tells the men to begin work and the most exhilarating part of the day takes place. Ivan lays bricks and is proud of the results. The men are late to return and have to be subjected to several counts, since the guards themselves could be imprisoned if they lost a man. The missing man is finally discovered, a Moldavian who fell asleep at his worksite. Although he is remorseful, he is sent to solitary confinement.

"The moon was really shining bright."

The rest of Ivan's day consists of earning more food by holding a place in the package line for Caesar, fighting his way past the orderly Clubfoot to get to his dinner, and buying tobacco with money he has made from odd jobs. He even gets Caesar's extra bread ration. Before roll call, Ivan feels pity for Fetyukov, who was beaten up for scrounging. He knows Fetyukov won't survive. He also feels sorry for Caesar, who might have most of the food from his package stolen, so he shows him how to hide it. The men are counted again before lights out. Caesar gives Ivan some of his goodies as thanks and Ivan shares with Aloysha. In bed Ivan hears Aloysha thank God and Ivan reviews his day, concluding that it was an unusually good one.

Characters

Alyoshka

Ivan's bunk mate, he is known by his religion. He represents the spiritual element that survives despite the atheism that is a cornerstone of Communism, in which the State is the only religion. He reads his Bible and is protected by Ivan, who respects his faith. In fact, Ivan wonders how Alyoshka can survive without extra rations and shares his cookie from Caesar with him.

The Baptist

*See*Alyoshka

Big Ivan

A tall, thin guard, he is the most easygoing of the lot.

Buynovsky

One of Ivan's bunk mates.

Captain Buynovsky

In the Russian navy, he was once a liaison officer on a British ship, since the British and Russians were allies during World War II. But after receiving a thank-you gift from a British officer for his good service, he was sentenced to twenty-five years of hard labor. Throughout the novel he changes from a die-hard military man to a clever inmate. When Buynovsky is sentenced to face ten days in solitary confinement for insubordination, Ivan wonders whether he will survive.

Captain Buynovsky

As his name implies, he is handicapped, but uses his disability to secure a good job. He's as hardboiled as anyone can be and even earns enough money to pay an assistant.

Der

The foreman at the construction site, he treats his fellow prisoners badly, but Ivan's gang sticks together against him to keep him in check.

Estonians

These two seem like brothers although they first met in camp; both are tall, fair, and thin and sleep in the same bunk. One of the two, called Eino, fills Ivan's request for tobacco after first consulting with his best friend.

Fetyukov

A scavenger whom Ivan dislikes. He used to be a big shot in an office, but in prison he is beaten up for scrounging. In the end Ivan feels sorry for him.

Gopchik

Only sixteen years old, he is enthusiastic and alert. Ivan thinks he will go far in the camps. Ivan lost his own son and seems to have fatherly feelings for Gopchik.

Stepan Grigoryevich

Although new, he is already known as a loudmouth, know-it-all doctor who believes work is the best cure for illness.

Ivan Kilgas

A Latvian and former bricklayer, he receives two packages a month, speaks Russian like a native, and jokes most of the time. He works well with Ivan, who realizes he has more in common with the Latvian than with his own family.

Senka Klevshin

A little deaf, the former Buchenwald inmate says if you fussed there, you were finished. Ivan works with him and respects him as a fellow survivor.

Kuzyomin

An old gang boss of Ivan's, he tells his men that the law of the jungle prevails in prison: the only way to survive is to not lick your bowl clean, not count on the infirmary, and not betray or "squeal on" other prisoners. Ivan took his advice to heart and never forgot it.

Caesar Markovich

Caesar was a cinematographer before his imprisonment. A rich intellectual, he receives packages that keep him well fed, yet he shares his food. Art is his god.

Moldavian

He falls asleep in a warm corner during the work day and fails to turn up for the count. When finally discovered, he is extremely remorseful but is nevertheless taken to solitary confinement, where rations are eight ounces of bread a day and a hot meal every third day. Shukhov says that after ten days in solitary, a man would be so weakened that he would have a difficult time getting back on his feet again.

Panteleyev

The man missing from the gang: no one knows if he is sick or a squealer.

Pavlo

The assistant gang boss from West Ukrainia, which was under Poland until after World War II and where the people are still polite, unlike the typical Soviet.

Shkuropatenko

Of beanpole physique, he is a prisoner paid to guard prefabricated panels against the prisoners pilfering them.

Ivan Denisovich Shukhov

The main character, Ivan is a peasant who was drafted during World War II. He managed to escape a German prison camp and return to Russia. For this he was imprisoned, since Soviet law considered any escapee a spy for the Germans. Although Ivan was innocent he thought it wiser to plead guilty, knowing that if he pleaded innocent, he'd be shot, but if he pleaded guilty, he'd go to prison. Ivan is forty years old, balding, and missing half his teeth. Although he'll do everything he can to survive, he maintains a strict personal code. For example, he will never take or give a bribe, betray others, or lick his bowl clean. He represents the common man in the Soviet Union, an inspiring Russian survivor.

Thin Tartar

Called by his nationality, he is one of the guards, thin and hairless, who threatens to send Ivan to solitary confinement but then relents and sends him to mop the warders' office. The cold doesn't seem to bother him.

Tyurin

On his second sentence, this gang boss does everything he can to take care of the gang. Ivan knew him at another camp but wasn't in his gang. Of all the men in the camp, Tyurin is the one man Ivan would never cheat; the gang boss is crucial to survival.

Nikolay Semyonovich Vdovushkin

Technically a medic, he spends the day writing poetry, thanks to Dr. Grigoryevich, his patron. The Russian love for poetry is evident here.

Lieutenant Volkovoy

A much-feared disciplinary officer with a reputation for using a whip. His name is derived from "wolf."

Y-81

An old prisoner who has survived with his dignity intact, he is Ivan's hero.

Themes

Man versus Society

Ivan represents the common man; the immediate society he lives in is prison. Every day he struggles to survive physically and psychologically. The prison supplies him with the bare necessities: food, shelter, and a job. His choices are few, but the one great choice is his: to live or to die. His choice to survive impacts the greater society: man can go on despite whatever cruelties society imposes.

The Truth versus the Lie

Ivan was imprisoned in the forced labor camp for the crime of high treason. During World War II, the Germans captured a great many Soviet soldiers. Ivan was one. However, he escaped and returned to his own lines. The Soviets believed he lied about escaping and was really spying for the Germans. Ivan realized if he told the truth, he'd be shot, but if he lied and said he was a spy, he'd be sent to prison. When one lie is stacked upon another, the light of truth is obscured. This is what happened under the tyranny of Josef Stalin, the Soviet leader—the vast majority of the Soviet people became accomplices to lies.

Life versus Death

Ivan chose living with lies over dying for truth. In his case, was the truth worth dying for or was surviving the better choice? What is the value of life and the value of the life Ivan is living? When is death of more value?

Good versus Evil

Every choice Ivan makes in his day is a moral one and is motivated by survival. He commits himself to his own survival by choosing to conserve his energy on a job that he doesn't want to do (mopping the floor for the inhuman warders) or to expand his energy on a job that gives him pleasure (bricklaying with the gang). He chooses who among the others should survive by selecting those who will receive his extra cookie or cigarette butt. His decision is always for the needy (for example, Alyoshka) instead of the greedy (Fetyukov).

The Individual versus the Unjust Law

In ancient Greece, Sophocles asked in his play *Antigone*, how does an individual deal with an unjust law? Should it be obeyed or flouted? To flout it one must be dedicated to a higher moral truth and one must be courageous. But in Ivan's world, this question is

broader: how does an individual deal with an unjust system? Ivan gives his answer: survive it.

Style

On Translations

Most critics feel the best of the original translations of One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich is the Bantam book version. According to the translators, Max Haywood and Ronald Hingley, Solzhenitsyn's novella is written in the slang from the concentration camp and in the vocabulary of the Russian peasant. To express this in English, they have used American slang, such as "can" and "cooler" for solitary confinement, and unpolished diction in expressions like "Let em through" and "Get outa the way." Russian obscenities, never before printed in the Soviet Union, were for the most part translated into their English equivalents.

The Novella

A novella is longer than a short story but shorter than a traditional novel. In *One Day*, Solzhenitsyn presents his tale like a long short story. There are no chapters, only a flowing narrative. The visual breaks are the spacings signaling a change of place or a change of time. This form also suggests that the reader can finish the work in one sitting to get its full impact.

Socialist Realism

Literature under the Communists had to meet the standards of Socialist Realism; this meant not criticizing the Communist party. Therefore, content was more important than style, and since the party believed that religion was the "opiate of the people," that capitalism was evil, and that socialism was superior to all other political systems, content was severely limited. Writings resulted in contradictions, hypocracies, and lies: "victory without defeat, radical social change without injustice, and complete centralization of power without autocracy," according to James Curtis in *Solzhenitsyn's Traditional Imagination*.

Point of View

Solzhenitsyn uses the third person, limited omniscient narrator. This means the story is told by a narrator who refers to all the characters as he, she, or they and describes the thoughts and feelings of the main character, in this case, Ivan. Therefore, the narrator is omniscient or all-knowing with regard to Ivan. However, he is limited with regard to the other characters who are only described externally, not internally. The third person allows the narrator to make general comments outside of the main character's mind. For example: "But now all at once something happened in the column, like a wave going through it.... The fellows in the back—that's where Shukhov was—had to run now ... "

Chekhovian Technique

Christopher Moody in *Solzhenitsyn*points out that Solzhenitsyn uses Chekhov's technique of "evoking a whole impression by means of a few ... emotionally neutral" words. For example, from the very beginning of the book, the cold is mentioned as is the value of footwear, so by the time Ivan leaves with his gang for the outside and "the snow creaked under their boots," the complete setting of the pre-dawn, freezing cold in a stark, snowflattened landscape comes alive. The creaking is the warning sound that less than an inch of boot separates flesh from ice, and therefore life from death..

Russian Terms

There are a few terms used in the novella that are strictly Russian.*Zek* refers to a man serving in a forced-labor camp or one who has already served. The "free workers" are former zeks who have nowhere to go, so they work for the camp.*Kolkhozniks* are collective farmers and a *kolkhoz* is a collective farm.*Kulaks* are displaced farmers who rejected the collective farms.

Historical Context

Censorship in Russian Literature

The history of Russian literature has been one of censorship, first under the czars and then under the Soviets. In the 19th century, the poet Pushkin, the novelists Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoyevski, and the dramatists Gogol and Chekhov, to name a few, elevated Russian literature to world renown, but these writers labored under the threat of exile, imprisonment, or death if their works were deemed politically unacceptable. Pushkin was exiled for a time. Dostoyevski had a crueler experience: he was condemned to the firing squad before the czar's messenger brought the order to commute the execution at the very last minute. In the 20th century, under the Soviets, censorship seemed even more severe and difficult to contain under the explosive advances of mass communication. But the Soviets felt that if communism wasn't the practical solution to all social ills, they would not allow that failing to come to the attention of the outside world. Soviet writers were forbidden to criticize the system; if they dared, they were silenced. A great writer like Bulgakov had his works banned, while the Nobel prize-winning Pasternak had his works smuggled out of the country to be published in the West.

The Penal Camps

One hundred years after Dostoyevski wrote *Notes from the House of the Dead* about his experiences in a penal camp, Solzhenitsyn wrote *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. According to critic Christopher Moody in *Solzhenitsyn*, after one hundred years the penal camps had become even more inhumane. In Dostoyevski's time, prisoners received sufficient food, enough time to devote to private activities, the opportunity to socialize with the nearby population, and the "certain knowledge of freedom at the end of their term." Solzhenitsyn's prisoners had no such guarantee. In fact, once free, they were exiled from their home towns.

Josef Stalin

The question arises: what happened in those hundred years to worsen things to such an inhumane degree? In a word, Stalin. Josef Stalin also spent time in these camps, but he was a man dedicated to political ideology. He clawed his way to the position of dictator over the bodies of his competitors, ruthlessly formed the Soviet Union into a world power, and earned the reputation of being perhaps the greatest mass murderer in Western civilization. Although Solzhenitsyn refers only once to Stalin in his novella, the ruler's demonic spirit permeates the camp. The paranoid laws that condemned so many of the men to camp were the same laws that condemned any real freedom outside of it.

Nikita Khrushchev

In 1950, Nikita Khrushchev, then premier of the USSR, wanted to de-Stalinize the Communist Party. He attributed the fact that Josef Stalin had destroyed more Soviet people than those who died in all Russian wars combined and yet retained his incredible hold over the Soviet people to "the cult of personality." Khrushchev wanted to put an end to Stalin's influence beyond the grave in order to strengthen his own power, and Solzhenitsyn's story seemed the perfect eulogy. Thanks to Solzhenitsyn's courage and continuing novels, the truth about Stalin was destined to live.

Critical Overview

Although Solzhenitsyn's work deals with politics from *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*to *The Gulag Archipelago*, perhaps what has been most detrimental to his reputation is his political statements. After being expelled from the Soviet Union and seeking refuge in Europe and the United States, he constantly criticized the West. Invited to give the commencement speech at Harvard University, Solzhenitsyn attracted one of the largest crowds in Harvard's history and was televised nationally. In his address, entitled "The World Split Apart," he called for unification, but his remarks seemed to create new splits and his speech was highly criticized.

Solzhenitsyn is a mathematician and physicist by training and a writer by profession. When asked to speak, however, he inevitably poses questions on politics and philosophy and freely gives his own answers. Although many of his criticisms are valid, he has a xenophobic vision of Russia, seeing it as morally superior to the West because Russia skipped the stage of competitive capitalism on her way to cooperative socialism. Many critics also believe that he misunderstands the inherent duality of western freedom, that it results in bad choices as well as good ones. Michael Scammell in *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* quotes Solzhenitsyn as saying, "I cannot be regarded in political terms. A writer's view differs in kind from that of the politician or the philosopher." Yet, as Scammell concludes, Solzhenitsyn chooses not to take the stance of the writer, but instead embraces that of the political philosopher.

Solzhenitsyn's moral integrity remains unquestioned, his literary skills are laudable even in poor translations, and he is often forgiven much politicizing because he comes from the literary tradition of socialist realism. While his intellectual sweep is not generally considered all-encompassing, most critics do not expect it to be.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Bolan is an adjunct faculty member of Columbia College of Missouri extensions, a published writer of essays, short stories, and poems, and a playwright. In the following essay, she examines Ivan as the protagonist in One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich *and how this character affects setting, symbol, and theme in a literary, political, and personal way.*

When Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote his testament to truth, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, he based it on his own experience, but he chose for a protagonist a Russian peasant. This choice of the common man, whose code of prison ethics is a blueprint for survival, affects the setting, symbol, and theme in a literary, political, and personal way.

In a literary and even political way, Ivan Denisovich Shukhov as the protagonist represents Russia more than any other type; his peasant wisdom goes unquestioned and his motive to survive needs no explanation. Hasn't the shrewd peasant existed for hundreds of years and endured innumerable, unbearable hardships? If Aloysha the Baptist were the protagonist, his every motive would have to be double-checked against religious restrictions; if Caesar were the protagonist, an artist's eye would color the perspective; if any of the non-Russians were protagonists, a cultural bias would be seen; a man of status like the Captain would be testing his military code against survival, and the gang leader or his assistant would constantly be looking out for the good of the gang. If Solzhenitsyn had based the protagonist on himself, an intellectual who wrote poetry in the camps, Shukhov would be escaping to his mind instead of wrestling with his hostile environment.

Shukhov is a shrewd and daring peasant; whenever he breaks the rules—bringing in the steel wedge, hiding a tool—he knows not to get caught. So why wouldn't a man like this try to escape? Escape is never mentioned, but enough description makes escape from Siberia, the Devil's Island of the north, seem ludicrous. Surrounding the prison complex is a treeless plain of snow and ice, of darkness without warmth and a noonday sun that makes a zek sweat and then leaves him wet and cold. Siberia is a place to *escape* from. Although Shukhov finds his greatest joy bricklaying in the subzero weather, nightfall necessarily ends it as does his need for food. In fact, the endless tundra makes prison, where hunger and cold vie with each other for the bodies and souls of the zeks, a place Shukhov calls home. At least he's free from the biting wind and can grab a few minutes of free time.

The other setting, prison, reveals a variety of Soviet personalities, both Russian and satellite ethnicities, and, most importantly, the code Shukhov needs to survive. Because he's a hero without an attitude, the sadistic guards or warders swirling around him and the prisoners scrambling to survive physically and psychologically, from scrounger to gang leader to goner, are seen unblinkingly. So, too, is Shukhov. His only task is to survive and he's picked up all the tricks, from not losing his dignity by licking his bowl but using his crust to clean it, to earning an extra bowl of mush by holding another

prisoner's place in the pick-up line for packages. Plotting for scraps of food and clothing or a few drags off someone else's cigarette fill up his day. Emotionally he can survive, too. He tells his family not to send him food, knowing they have none to spare, and he doesn't delude himself with sweet dreams of life after prison. First, he has no guarantee his prison sentence won't be extended; second, he's forbidden to go back to his home as all prisoners are automatically exiled from their hometown; third, his wife wrote him about the latest craze of painting carpets to support their meager earnings from the collective farm, but this doesn't inspire him. In fact, the most likely outcome for Shukhov is becoming a "free worker," if he lives to get out.

Shukhov the peasant is symbolic of Russia; he resonates through her literature. In the 19th century, Turgenev humanized the serf, Tolstoy glorified him, and Chekhov laughed with him. In the 20th century, Solzhenitsyn politicizes him, suggesting he resonates through Russian history. Under the czars, his ancestors were slaves to the land; under the communists, he's a prisoner to the system. Shukhov symbolizes a man without hope—for a better day, a better life, an afterlife. Yet, he dares to go on. This is survival down to the marrow.As in any work of art, many themes abound, but the one unfinished theme is reinforced by Shukhov as the protagonist. For there is no escape from the primary question *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* raises: how could the camps, filled with so many of the unjustly accused, exist? The answer falls into the political realm of *Stalinism*. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn mentions Stalin only once, on an editorial recommendation; originally he was never mentioned—the reader was to supply his name. Still, the result is the same: the name Stalin is as much a part of the novel as the name Shukhov. Now the question becomes clearer: how could the Soviet people allow Josef Stalin, possibly the greatest mass murderer in western civilization, to govern them?

The answer is found in Russian history with its clashes of political ideologies and its own evolution of Marxism. Before the fanatical Communists were the insular czars, the Romanoffs, unaccountable to their people for over 300 years. Although many peasant rebellions were put down by the czar's army, the system of serfdom kept four-fifths of the people enslaved, the exclusive property of their masters. Finally in 1861, the serfs were freed, but in the largest country on earth, they were not allowed to own land individually. From this the commune slowly evolved and decisions were made communally, drowning out individual voices and preparing the way for socialism.

Still, the starving peasants, this time joined by the army, finally had a successful revolution, the revolution of March, 1917. The October revolution in that same year, the one led by the Bolsheviks, is the famous one, but the March revolution was truly the voice of the most abused groups in Russia—her serfs and her soldiers. The Bolsheviks saw their opportunity to use the peasants, soon to be called workers, in the future for Communism just as the czars had used them in the past for the monarchy. The czars had claimed to be under God; the atheistic Bolsheviks had no such restrictions.

Marxism, the Bolshevik philosophy, proposes equality for all and an end of institutions including the withering away of the state; it is utopian in that it seeks an ideal solution to economic and political problems. However, revolutionaries like Lenin and Stalin were

cold-blooded men who believed the ruthless attainment of putting their ideas in motion was justified by any evil means. A vicious civil war followed the revolution and Russia had to leave the First World War to the rest of Europe until she stabilized herself politically. The Bolsheviks renamed themselves Communists and Soviet history began.

When Lenin died, Stalin eventually replaced him and sought to radicalize the Soviet state by collectivization of agriculture, which was the basis of the economy, and industry, which was barely represented. His first five-year plan, which was based on expropriating food from the farm workers, failed, and the resulting famine was so invasive that cannibalism was common. Stalin passed a law that anyone stealing five ears of corn could be imprisoned for ten years or shot to death. From the reformist ideals of Marxism came a tyrant's reign of terror.

Unchecked because of his control of government, the army, and the secret police, Stalin exiled, jailed, or murdered anyone he perceived as a potential threat to his power. But he didn't stop at the offending person; he punished their family, friends, and acquaintances. To understand the rationale of a dictator, Lord Acton phrased it best: "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." To understand the reactions of the people, Solzhenitsyn shows it best: they're too busy trying to survive and too terrified to do much else.

Not until de-Stalinization in the 1960s was the bubble of truth, words in a magazine, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*,allowed to rise into the forbidden air of Soviet lies. Behind the peasant descendant of serfs, the protagonist Ivan Denisovich, emerges the real giant-slayer. For Shukhov is the fiction of Solzhenitsyn, and it is Solzhenitsyn, former zek, who exposes Stalin in the most political, yet personal, theme of the novel.

Critical Essay #2

In the essay below, Cismaru reflects on the important role food plays in not only the physical but also the psychological survival of prisoners in the gulag.

The year 1983 marks the twentieth anniversary of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Although this important work has benefited from numerous critical comments abroad, in this country there have been only cursory exegeses.With the hindsight of two decades it may be profitable to look at it again. Because the theme of physical survival is at the core of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, and because, so far, its importance has been eclipsed by critics in favor of that of spiritual victory, this essay will emphasize Solzhenitsyn's concern with food collection, ingestion, digestion, and with body preservation in general.

Those who know Solzhenitsyn are aware of the fact that he is a hearty eater, a gourmet and perhaps even a gourmand. But this is not the main reason for his preoccupation with food as a requirement for survival. Men who have experienced the gulag, or indeed any imposed confinement know that more than the rigors of climate, more than the forced marches and forced labor and the beatings and the spiritual deprivations, the incarcerated notes first and foremost the quasi-absence of food and the poor quality of that which is available. One need not go so far as Freud and proclaim that the mouth is the sexual organ par *excellence*, that eating is essentially a sexual act, in order to acquiesce in the centrality of food ingestion in man's daily routine. Moreover, no sort of spiritual well-being or preservation is possible for long on a starvation diet. It is this truism, more than Solzhenitsyn's own culinary concerns, that made him devote many a passage in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* to the art of eating in prison.

Kuzyomin, the brigade foreman in the camp, a person with a twelve-year experience in the modus vivendirequired by the gulag, has a formula for survival, one which he shares liberally with the others: "Here, fellows, *taiga* is the law." A Russian word meaning "virgin Siberian forest," *taiga* implies the law of the beasts of the jungle, the law that recognizes that only the fittest survive, and that fitness is the result of adequate food intake. No wonder, then, that the problems of hunger and diet are introduced as soon as the novel begins, in the description of the so-called breakfast shoved in front of the prisoners.

Ivan Denisovich Shukhov, with the accumulated tact of eight years of incarceration, looks upon eating as an artful endeavor whose gestures are meticulously performed, as befits the discipline of the artist:

The only good thing about camp gruel was it was usually hot, but what Shukhov had was now quite cold. Even so, he ate it slow and careful like he always did. Mustn't hurry now, even if the roof caught fire....The fish was mostly bones. The flesh was boiled off except for bits on the tails and the heads. Not leaving a single scale or speck of flesh on the skeleton, Shukhov crunched and sucked the bones and spit them out on the table. He didn't leave anything—not even the gills or the tail. He ate the eyes too when they were still in place.

Though Shukhov must be a beast, Solzhenitsyn adds, "But when they 'the eyes' come off and were floating around in the bowl on their own he didn't eat them." This line asserts not so much a minimal awareness of the fact that even in the jungle there are traces of morality and ethics, as it points to the necessity that ingestion must maintain certain standards which would not conflict with proper digestion. Should nausea and vomiting result from certain unappetizing foods, or from their unappetizing presentation, the calories taken in would be lost, at least partially. In his careful survival scheme Shukhov realizes that he cannot afford this risk.

Eating, then, is no longer an elemental activity, deriving from instinct and being pursued casually. It is a strategy replete with well-formulated tactics designed to afford the undernourished the best chances of retaining a viable body. More importantly, it becomes, without the hero's knowledge, a religious ritual which is approached with respect and quasi-reverence. Thus, during lunch, the process of chewing every mouthful is described minutely. Shukhov's hands, lips, tongue, taste buds and facial muscles participate in unison, slowly and deliberately, for the ultimate enjoyment of swallowing and digesting. Every single trace of food is scraped from the bowl with a piece of bread saved until last for this purpose. When Shukhov has finished, the bowl looks as if it has been washed and dried by the most thorough of hands.

Prior to lunch on the same day, Shukhov has been able, through astute maneuvering and wellplanned tactics, to secure from the kitchen staff a few extra bowls of food for his brigade. He thus becomes entitled to a second helping. Therefore he eats his first portion even more slowly, trying not to feel as partially full as he does normally. Having conditioned his stomach to the proper introduction of the second ration, he proceeds to eat his mush with the acute pleasure of one who becomes sexually aroused again soon after experiencing climax. All his senses are now at play and extreme concentration is required in order for him to reach yet another gourmet's orgasm....

Post-meal euphoria is, however, ... shortlived. Soon reality sneaks back, and at times, in order to avoid it, the hero's thoughts revert to the past, before his incarceration. But even recollections of family and friends pale before those having to do with food:

In the camp he often remembered how he used to eat in the village—potatoes by the panful and pots of kasha, and in the early days before that, great hunks of meat. And they swilled enough milk to make their bellies burst. But he understood in the camps this was all wrong. You had to eat with all your thoughts on the food, like he was nibbling off these little bits now, and turn them over on your tongue, and roll them over in your mouth—and then it tasted so good, this soggy black bread.

When it is come by easily, affluence provides less pleasure than scarcity which is well managed and calculatingly appropriated. Of course, Shukhov does not see the sour-grapes attitude involved in such reasoning. His need to think that he is making a go of camp life is so great that he has succeeded in conditioning himself psychologically to feelings and thoughts that make survival possible. Yet, at the same time, it may be concluded that this is all the more to his credit because the gulag affords no other means of overcoming starvation and death.

In fact, starvation in the gulag is not merely punishment for sins committed against the State; it is above all a way of having the prisoners compensate the State, a way of controlling and rendering more efficient their labor which enhances the economic well-being of the State. That is why the slave-labor force of the camp is divided into brigades and why the collective work of the brigade is considered rather than that of an individual prisoner. Each has to do his share of work, or else all members of the brigade have their rations cut or diminished:

In the camp they had these 'brigades' to make the prisoners keep each other on their toes.... It was like this—either you all get something extra or you all starved. ("You're not pulling your weight, you swine, and I've got to go hungry because of you. So work, you bastard!").

Each *beast* in the camp must contribute, then, to the maintenance of survival based on food allotments, which in turn are based on the amount of daily work.

Not meeting a work quota even for one day involves a cut in rations. If the *beast* is not properly fed one day, the work quota cannot be met the next, which means that a vicious circle is created, leading to slow death by starvation. Hence *beast* pushes *beast* to do his best, the collective survival of all depending on the efforts of each. The gulag strips the person of even his most individualistic traits, and at the end of the tunnel, if ever one gets there, is a spoonful of mush.

The camp's currency is, of course, food. The State gets the work it wants done for the food it gives the prisoners; the authorities are bribed with food in parcels sent by relatives to the gulag; when a theft is committed food is always involved directly or indirectly. The emperor of the camp is the chief cook. He disposes of the food as he sees fit and puts on the airs of a French chef at a fancy resort. He controls innumerable assistants, acts pompously and authoritatively, yet all he actually does is boil water and groats, preparing a meal that any Boy Scout could fix over a campfire.

The importance of nourishment is presented with most vigor however in the oft-repeated or alluded to question of whether those who clear off the tables should lick the other prisoners' bowls thereby providing themselves with extra food. Kuzyomin's code forbids this, for it makes one dependent on scraps, and the humiliation of the act of licking is bound to strip one of any vestige of human dignity. Self-respect, though required for spiritual preservation, may be at odds with the caloric intake necessitated by the body. Shukhov is unable to choose easily: "And the worst thing was that if there was something left in the bowls you started to lick them. You couldn't help it." His concern for moral and esthetic standards conflicts with his appetite which is spurred by the continuous hunger within. But there is no transcendental reality in the gulag; there is no hereafter with its notions of reward and punishment. There is only the stark presence of starvation, the pain in the stomach emanating in the limbs and in the throat, the need to fill the void with something solid, with anything that will ease the hurt and make for life, or the semblance of life. There is nothing beyond the natural limits of the physical world here and now, and, within the confines of the camp, life is its own reward.

In addition, Kuzyomin's code may be wrong with reference to licking the bowls, reasons Shukhov, because it is wrong when it forbids a prisoner to spy on another prisoner. The code maintains that a stool pigeon cannot survive, but Shukhov's observation proves otherwise. He remarks: "About the secret spying he [Kuzyomin], of course, exaggerated. Exactly those [the stool pigeons] do survive." In the jungle there is no room for the niceties of principle, and those who live by the laws of the outside die inside. If Shukhov ultimately resists the temptation to lick the bowls, it is for the same practical reason that he would not eat the eyes of a fish floating in a soup: fear that physical repulsion would induce nausea and vomiting. The law of the taiga cannot be mellowed or modified, and Shukhov can only accept that part of it which helps physical survival. Kuzyomin cannot have it both ways; Shukhov will not even try, for the risk is personal annihilation.

In fact, the more one is confined in the gulag, the more animalistic his reaction to food becomes. For example, sniffing turns out to be the most efficient sensory mode for detecting the presence and the sort of food. When one of the prisoners, Caesar Markovich, receives a parcel from home, he need not unpack the contents in order for Shukhov to know exactly what they are:

Like all the others he had the eyes of a hawk, and in a flash they ran over the things Caesar had laid out on the bed and on the locker. But though he still hadn't taken the paper off them or opened the bags, Shukhov couldn't help telling by ... a sniff of the nose that Caesar had gotten sausage, canned milk, a large smoked fish, fatback, crackers with one kind of smell and cookies with another, and about four pounds of lump sugar. And then there was butter, cigarettes, and pipe tobacco.

Shukhov's sense of smell is so precise that he can distinguish "crackers with one kind of smell" from cookies with another. In the gulag, the human being-become-beast develops the instincts of the latter, and, in time, uses them with the same degree of accuracy.

Finally, the sacramental quality that food has for the incarcerated is shown poignantly in a discussion the hero has with the prisoner Alyoskha. The latter, a devout believer in the Baptist Church and a practitioner of its codes, talks to Shukhov in an attempt to convert him to Christianity. His speech, replete with vocabulary that might be effective outside, is powerless in the confines of the camp. Where physical survival is paramount, it is useless to invoke the might of the spirit, the immortality of the soul, and the purity of Paradise. Evangelical metaphors, likewise, are ill-placed in the atmosphere of the gulag, and the miracle of moving mountains means little to someone whose every moment of continued existence is in itself a miracle. And so Alyoskha fails; but, significantly, when he refers to the daily bread in the Lord's Prayer, Shukhov properly asks: "You mean that ration [the daily one hundred gram bread allotment per man] we get?" Obviously, if that is all a person can hope for, or is permitted to ask of God, then, Shukhov reasons, there is not much point in prayer.

Shukhov's spirit, then, reduced by imprisonment to instinct, acts in order to attain measurable and immediate results: the maximum caloric intake to maintain physical

viability, which allows him to work and avoid the ire of the other prisoners and the camp authorities. One can stay alive this way, and one can count the days that pass and those that remain in one's sentence. We meet Shukhov for only one day. We do not know if he will survive until he is released, or indeed if he will be released—the Soviet courts can renew a sentence if they so deem advisable. Still, we may conclude that his chances of self-preservation are good. After all, the law of the *taiga* may have its shortcomings (Shukhov recognizes these himself), but it is a natural law, one that ought to work. Man's responsibility to his body may be secondary under normal conditions; within the narrow limitations of the gulag it becomes primordial.

Adaptations

One Word of Truth in videocassette form is a documentary narrated by Tom Courtney and produced by Anglo-Nordic Productions that recreates Solzhenitsyn's Nobel Prize speech.

Caspar Wrede filmed *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, starring Tom Courtney.

Alexander Ford adapted *The First Circle*, considered by many the most autobiographical of Solzhenitsyn's novels, for film in 1973.

Topics for Further Study

During the 1940s and '50s, a practice called "blacklisting" took effect in the film industry in Hollywood. Any writer, director, or actor who had previously belonged to the Communist party could not find work. Investigate this reactionary stage of American history and examine it from all sides: the government prosecutors, the accused, the informants, and the sympathizers.

The word "Siberia" conjures up a vision of an endless snowcovered plain and cold blue sky. Make a map of the camp Solzhenitsyn describes and plan an escape. Then, using a real map, choose a place in Siberia where the camp might have been located and plan an escape route out of the former USSR to freedom.

Compare and contrast capitalism and communism. Remember that capitalism needs a freemarket society in order to operate. How does each philosophy regard man, how does it effect the resulting culture, and what are the economic pluses and minuses of each?

Find copies of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by different translators and compare a section of text that could suggest subtle but slightly different interpretations. Discuss and demonstrate the problems of studying literature in translation.

Compare and Contrast

1914: Russia enters World War I against Germany and Austria-Hungary, enduring several crushing defeats.

1917:The Russian Revolution refers to two revolutions. In March, starving rioters joined by the army overthrow the Romanov czars who ruled Russia for over three hundred years. In October, a second revolution led by Lenin put the Bolsheviks in power.

1918-20: Russia pulls out of World War I.

1932-34: Famine results from agricultural collectivization (communal farming); the government conceals this from the outside world so that no international aid can come to alleviate the situation. Cannibalism is rampant in the countryside and starving villagers attack nearby villages for food. Roughly 10 to 15 million people perish in the famine and the epidemics that follow.

1929-38: Stalin purges the party of his enemies and supposed enemies; by 1937, he begins to purge the Red Army, resulting in millions of citizens being arrested and sentenced to the camps. (Anyone arrested has their family, friends and associates arrested; this accounts for every Soviet citizen having some personal involvement with the camps); by 1938 the Red Army, having lost its trained officers, is considerably weakened.

1941:Stalin is considered responsible for the demoralization and decimation of the Red Army. Officers are shot if they refuse to lead impossible missions and soldiers who were captured by the German enemy and escaped are punished. Their families feel the consequences also. The Red Army is guessed to have lost 7 to 10 million men in the course of World War II according to J.N. Westwood in *Russia:1917-1964*.

1942: In the Battle of Stalingrad the Russians valiantly defeat the Germans, resulting in a turning point of World War II.

1945: World War II ends and the Soviets begin accumulating 6 satellite countries of Eastern Europe.

1953: Stalin dies.

1922-91: The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is created and becomes the most powerful Communist nation on earth. The USSR finally collapses, the satellite countries Russia dominated claim their independence, and Russia, too, becomes an independent nation again.

What Do I Read Next?

Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead*, written one hundred years prior to Solzhenitsyn's novella, provides a brilliant insight into the penal camps of the 19th century.

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl is a profoundly moving work on the Nazi concentration camps, shedding light on the psychological impact of camp life.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Stories and Prose Poems,translated by Michael Glenny, contains the famous "Matryona's House" and "An Incident at Krechetovka Station" plus lesser-known pieces.

In *Cancer Ward*,Solzhenitsyn used him own experience with cancer to write a polyphonic novel, that is, a novel with several main characters instead of just one.

Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* is considered the most autobiographical of his novels and takes place in a "sharashka," a prison for scientists to do research while serving their sentences. The title is based on Dante's first circle of hell in The Inferno.

Stalin: The History of a Dictator by H. Montgomery Hyde is a clearly written, suspenseful and Western view of that dictator's political and moral strengths and weaknesses.

For a visceral understanding of Russia's pain and triumph in the Second World War, *Russia at War: 1941-45* by Vladimir Karpov has large, black and white photographs of battles and their aftermath.

An unusual book because of its subject matter, *A Dance with Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II* by Anne Noggle provides biographical essays and photographs of the first women in the world to fly combat missions.

A History of Soviet Russia by Adam B. Ulam begins with the Bolsheviks and their selfless determination to free the masses and ends with *detente*,the peaceful coexistence of the USSR and the US in the 1970s.

Further Study

Steven Allaback, *Alexander Solzhenitsyn*, Taplinger Publishing Company, 1978.

An informative look at the craftsmanship and genius of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, The First Circle, The Cancer Ward, and August 1914*.

Francis Barker,*Solzhenitsyn:Politics and Form*, Barnes & Noble, 1977.

The author traces Solzhenitsyn's rejection of Marxism and a willingness to explore democracy in his first novels to a reactionary political vision in his later ones.

Ronald Berman, editor,*Solzhenitsyn at Harvard*,Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980.

Solzhenitsyn's famous commencement address at Harvard is reprinted, followed by media comments and essays for a deeper analysis of that event.

Hans Bjorkegren, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: A Biography,The Third Press, 1972.

Translated from the Swedish, this biography has the insight expected from an ever-vigilant neighbor.

Olga Carlisle, *Solzhenitsyn and the Secret Circle*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

Born in Russia, American by marriage, and an enemy of Solzhenitsyn's, Olga Carlisle presents her assertion that she and her husband, a translator, were used by Solzhenitsyn.

Alex De Jonge,*Stalin and the Shaping of the Soviet Union*, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986.

De Jonge used archival material and living witnesses to trace Stalin's humble beginnings and his rise to despotism, his purges and liquidations, his role in World War II, and the subsequent expanding of the USSR map.

Helene Carrere D'Encausse,*Stalin:Order through Terror*, Longman, 1981.

In her second volume on the history of the Soviet Union, this Parisian professor examines the rise of Stalinism until Stalin's death.

John B. Dunlop, Richard Haugh, and Alexis Klimoff, editors, *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials*, Nordland Publishing, 1973.

This volume includes not only literary criticism of Solzhenitsyn in English but also four translated documents written by Solzhenitsyn about his philosophy and his craft.

John B. Dunlop, Richard S. Haugh, and Michael Nicholson, editors,*Solzhenitsyn in Exile*, Hoover Institution Press, 1985.

A collection of essays and documentary material of particular use to researchers. The critical essays examine Solzhenitsyn and his work; the documentary material consists of memoirs, interviews, and bibliographies.

John and Carol Gerrard,*Inside the Soviet Writers' Union*, Collier Macmillan, 1990.

The authors look inside one of the Soviet Union's most powerful tools for propaganda, the Writers' Union. Dedicated to the idea of Socialist Realism, this organization did its best to kill Russian creativity.

Paul Gray, "Russia's Prophet in Exile," *Time*,Vol. 134, No. 4, July 24, 1989, pp. 56-60.

An insightful interview with Solzhenitsyn on politics, literature, and religion.

Oakley Hall,*The Art & Craft of Novel Writing*,Writer's Digest Books, 1989.

Not only is this a well-thought analysis of how to write a novel, but it explains the techniques that lead the reader to the desired response.

K. P., "The Sage of Vermont," *Forbes*, Vol. 153, No. 10, May 9, 1994, p. 122.

A brief, unbiased overview of Solzhenitsyn's relationship to the United States.

Nikita S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, Little, Brown and Company, 1974.

The last volume of an oral history dictated by the former premier has a fascinating section on Stalin and his treatment of writers.

Vladislav Krasnov,*Solzhenitsyn and Dostoevsky*,University of Georgia Press, 1980.

Using the three earliest Solzhenitsyn novels, the author states that Solzhenitsyn is closer to Dostoevsky than Tolstoy, especially in the concept of the polyphonic novel where there is no main character, but rather several.

Georg Lukacs,*Solzhenitsyn*, The MIT Press, 1969.

A literary criticism that judges Solzhenitsyn in the tradition of Socialist Realism and the literary problems of the Stalinist era.

Judith Newman, "From Vermont, with Love," *People*, Vol. 41, No. 18, May 16, 1994, pp. 99-102.

The people of Vermont give a fond good-bye to the Solzhenitsyn family.

"Profile of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," 1988 *Current Biography* Yearbook, H. W. Wilson Company, 1988.

A comprehensive sketch of the author which highlights milestones in his life and is accompanied by his photographs.

Edvard Radzinsky,*Stalin: The First In-Depth Biography* Based On Explosive New Documents from Russia's Secret Archives, Doubleday, 1996.

This very readable translation by H. T. Willetts of the life of Stalin is organized into three sections: one for each of Stalin's names (his childhood name, the teenage name he gives himself, and the name of Stalin, meaning "steel"). Each chapter is divided into subtitled sections.

Abraham Rothberg,*Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: The Major Novels*, Cornell University Press, 1971.

An analysis of Solzhenitsyn's first three novels, this critique reaffirms the importance of the works from a moral, political, and artistic standpoint.

Marshall D Shulman,*Stalin's Foreign Policy Reappraised*, Harvard University Press, 1963.

A scholar of international politics, Shulman argues, contrary to popular opinion, that Russia's foreign policy began to become more flexible even before the death of Stalin.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*August 1914*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971.

This polyphonic novel examines the Battle of Tannenberg in World War I, a Russian defeat that showed the corruptions of the czarist system.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*Candle in the Wind*, University of Minnesota Press, 1960.

A play that examines scientific ethics: a scientist is confronted by a woman whose personality has been changed by biofeedback techniques.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*From under the Rubble*, Little, Brown and Company, 1974.

This collection of essays, edited by Solzhenitsyn and including two of his own essays, seeks to find a new, moral society. Soviet Russia is severely criticized and the West is seen as decadent.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*The Gulag Archipelago*, Harper & Row, 1973.

The "Gulag" is the acronym of secret police organizations including the camps. The author indicts this insidious segment of Soviet life using hundreds of characters and their stories.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*Lenin in Zurich*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975.

Chapters on Lenin in August 1914, Knot I, and in Knots II and III have now been enlarged and presented as a separate book, thanks to valuable research material Solzhenitsyn found in Zurich.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*Letter to the Soviet Leaders*,Harper & Row, 1974.

In "Nothing Changes for the Good," Solzhenitsyn predicts the destruction of Russia and the West. "War with China" is also a fascinating chapter and a cautionary tale for any country.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*The Oak and The Calf*, Harper & Row, 1979.

Solzhenitsyn's memoir of his writing career in Russia and how he had to confront even the KGB, the secret police. This English-language version, published four years after the Russian one, has added material.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Solzhenitsyn: A Pictorial Autobiography*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974.

Solzhenitsyn has put together a book of snapshots, most of which are of him. The writing is a short and powerful recapping of his life under Soviet tyranny.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,*Warning to the West*,Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976.

Solzhenitsyn begs the West to intervene in Soviet affairs for the future of the world.

B. H. Sumner, *A Short History of Russia*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1949.

As the title implies, this is a brief overview of Russia divided into the following components: the frontier, the state, the land, the church, the Slavs, the sea, and the West.

Bibliography

Chloe Bolan, in an essay for Novels for Students, Gale, 1999.

Alfred Cismaru, "*The Importance of Food in One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, " in *San Jose Studies*, Vol. IX, No. 1, Winter, 1983, pp. 99-105.

David Burg, and George Feifer, *Solzhenitsyn*,Stein and Day Publishers, pp. 155-156.

James M. Curtis, *Solzhenitsyn's Traditional Imagination*, The University of Georgia Press, 1984, p. 185.

Max Hayward and Ronald Hingley, translators, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Bantam Books, 1963, p. xviii.

Christopher Moody, *Solzhenitsyn*, Barnes and Noble, 1976, pp. 37-38.

Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography*, Norton, p. 981.

J. N. Westwood, *Russia 1917-1964*, Harper & Row, 1966, p. 122.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Novels for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

©1997-2002; ©2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc.

Gale and Design® and Thomson Learning™ are trademarks used herein under license.

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any

form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems—without the written permission of the publisher.

For permission to use material from this product, submit your request via Web at http://www.gale-edit.com/permissions, or you may download our Permissions Request form and submit your request by fax or mail to:

Permissions Department
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

Permissions Hotline:
248-699-8006 or 800-877-4253, ext. 8006
Fax: 248-699-8074 or 800-762-4058

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, The Gale Group, Inc. does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein. The Gale Group, Inc. accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". © 1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

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

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

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

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

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

Selection Criteria

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

How Each Entry Is Organized

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

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

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

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

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

Other Features

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

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

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

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

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

Citing Novels for Students

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

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

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

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

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

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

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

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

We Welcome Your Suggestions

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

Editor, Novels for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535