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## INTRODUCTION

### Russian Literature

Russian authors have used all literary forms, but are best known for their novels and poetry. Style, content, and keen character analysis contribute to the excellence of Russian writing. The most famous Russian works show a deep concern for moral, religious, and philosophical problems.

History has had an important influence on Russian literature. The acceptance of religion in Russia during the late 900's resulted in literature that consisted mostly of religious works. Themes of the *Tatar* (Mongol) invasion and conquest dominated Russian literature from the 1200's to the late 1400's. The Tatar occupation isolated Russia from Western Europe for more than 200 years. But by the end of the 1600's, translations and imitations of Western European works were appearing in many Russian writings. By the late 1700's, literature included expressions of social protest against the Czars, serfdom, and moral and political corruption.

The greatest Russian poetry, prose, and drama were written during the 1800's. The mid-1800's was the age of Realism in Russian literature. Beginning in the 1890's, an artistic and cultural revival known as the Silver Age emerged. It developed from a combination of Russian religious philosophy, the ideas of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, and artistic doctrines and poetry from France. Most of the great Russian poets of the 1900's

appeared during this period, which ended shortly after the Communist Revolution of 1917.

After 1917, literary activity was controlled by the Communist government. In 1922, the Communist government formed the Soviet Union, which existed until 1991. Government censors required that literature portray Soviet society as being full of optimism and joy of life. Writers who ignored such regulations faced the threat of severe punishment. However, the constant struggle of Soviet writers against censorship led to periods of creative freedom and experimentation.

### Early literature

**Religious literature.** The first Russian literature appeared at about A.D. 988. The literature came from the Byzantine Empire and the Slavic kingdoms of Bulgaria and Serbia. The writings were largely religious in the form of sermons, hymns, and biographies of saints. Many of these works, despite their religious themes, were characterized by imagination and vivid details of Russian life. Some works were original, but many were based on Greek writings.

Early Russian literature was written in a mixture of Russian and *Old Church Slavonic*, a related language. Old Church Slavonic came from the Slavic peoples of central and Balkan Europe. The Russians also were Slavs, and could understand the new language without much difficulty.

Most of Russia's first literary works were both written and read by clergymen. Until 1564, when the first books were printed in Russia, the clergymen copied all manuscripts by hand.

**Nonreligious literature.** The *chronicles*, which were records of outstanding events, were probably the most important early nonreligious Russian writings. The capital of each *principality* (region ruled by a prince) had its own chronicle. During the 1100's, some of these chronicles carried frequent warnings against the danger of a divided Russia. Later chronicles, particularly those of Moscow, claimed that their principalities had the right to reunite and rule all Russia. Much of a chronicle was dry narrative, but some accounts were vivid descriptions of military or political battles. Others were fantastic stories based on legend rather than fact.

The greatest work of early Russian literature was "The Lay of Igor's Campaign," written by an anonymous author of the late 1100's. This epic prose poem, famous for its vivid imagery and nature symbolism, describes the defeat of a Russian prince by the Polovtsians, an Asian tribe, in 1185. This work pleads for cooperation among the princes to prevent a foreign invasion.

**The literature of Tatar captivity** reflected less original thought than did the literature of any other period in Russian history. Tatar rule, which lasted until 1480, provided the dominant theme of the small amount of literature that did appear. The "Zadonshchina" ("The Battle Beyond the Don"), an important work of the 1400's, describes the first major Russian victory over the Tatars. It describes this great victory with solemnity rather

than jubilation. Christian imagery appears throughout "Zadonshchina." This work imitates the literary language and imagery of "The Lay of Igor's Campaign."

**Muscovite literature** developed as Moscow rose to power following the final defeat of the Tatars in 1480. All Russian-speaking territories were united into a single state under the grand prince of Moscow. Russia eventually became an empire, and the grand prince became known as Czar. Main themes of Muscovite literature included the right of Moscow to rule the Russian land, and the Czar's right to absolute authority. One work, the *Domostroy* (*Household Management*), advises a man to rule his family with complete authority. Other works praise the grandeur of the new Russian Empire. The most remarkable stylistic development of the Muscovite period is the elaborate *word-weaving*. It emphasizes style rather than content, including the formation of words and complex devices used in speaking and writing.

### **Beginnings of modern literature**

**Western influences.** The 1600's saw an almost complete reshaping of Russian literature. Western Europe, from which Russia had been isolated since the 1100's, began to have a strong influence on Russian writing. Western works, such as anecdotes, fables, moral tales, poetry, and stories of knighthood, were translated and imitated. For the first time, rhymed verse appeared in Russian literature. Russian folklore provided a source for many fairy tales, *satires* (writings that ridiculed persons or their actions), and other works. Some authors discarded the old literary language, and wrote in Russian.

The greatest writer of the new literature was Avvakum, a conservative clergyman who belonged to a group called the *Old Believers*. Avvakum's autobiography illustrates his colourful personality and religious convictions. His expressive language and vivid descriptions of daily life make his writings some of the most revealing works of this period.

Simeon Polotsky, who received a Western education in Kiev, was an outstanding author of the period. His most important contribution to literature was the introduction of a rigid syllabic system into Russian verse. Each line of poetry has a fixed number of syllables with regularly placed pauses. Polotsky wrote quaint but serious verse. Many of his works praise the Czar and the ruling family.

Another playwright influenced by Western literature was Johann Gregori, a German Lutheran pastor in Moscow. Gregori's crude comedies, based on Biblical stories, were specially performed for the Czar.

Czar Peter I (the Great), whose rule officially began in 1682, Westernized Russia. This adoption of Western culture and institutions led to great changes in Russian literature. Peter encouraged the translation of many European works and sent people abroad to study Western ways of life. He also invited large numbers of Europeans to Russia. European historians, architects, musicians, dancers, and writers came to Russia during and following Peter's rule.



The complete Westernization of Russian literature took place during the 1700's. Despite the many political changes that occurred in Russia, European culture continued to flourish there. Many French, German, and English works influenced Russian authors.

Antioch Kantemir, a leading poet and diplomat, wrote nine satires in syllabic verse supporting Peter the Great's reforms and the spread of Western culture. Kantemir used everyday speech in his works, and the informal language helped his characters appear lively and typically Russian.

Mikhail Lomonosov has been called the founder of modern Russian literature and the forerunner of Classicism. His dignified *odes* (lyric poems) praise the Czar and the greatness of God. Lomonosov introduced the modern Russian type of verse, featuring a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. He also established a



system of three literary styles. These styles varied among (1) the highest, or most dignified, language; (2) the middle language based on spoken Russian and (3) the lowest, or most popular, speech.

**The Classical movement**, introduced by Lomonosov's literary reforms, emerged fully in Russia in the 1740's. The Classical movement stressed the importance of reason and analysis in the interpretation of life. Classicism came to Russia as part of the continual cultural flow from Western Europe. It followed strict rules for composition,

style, and subject matter. These guidelines were inspired by models of ancient Greek and Roman literature and were influenced by the literary criticism in *The Art of Poetry* (1674) by Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux of France.

The most typical Russian Classicist was Alexander Sumarokov. His works included fables, plays, satires, and songs. Many of his comedies were amusing, but his tragedies were crude and monotonous.

Vasili Ivanovich Maykov, one of Sumarokov's followers, wrote a mock epic poem called *Elisey, or Bacchus Infuriated* (1771). This realistic work describes the hilarious adventures of a drunken coachman. Another important Classicist, Denis Fonvizin, became famous for his satirical comedies. *The Adolescent* (1782), though it has obvious flaws, is considered his finest work. This play attacks the ignorance and cruelty of country landowners. Fonvizin was forced out of literature in the 1780's after Empress Catherine II (the Great) prohibited him from publishing his writings.

The outstanding poet of the 1700's was Gavriil Derzhavin who, like Lomonosov, wrote mostly odes. In "Ode to Felitsa" (1783) and other poems, Derzhavin praises Catherine and ridicules the vices of her courtiers. He did much to make the ode a fresh poetry of life and feeling. His work marked the turning point in Russian literature from Classical to Romantic writing.

During the late 1700's and early 1800's, fables were the most popular form of literature. Russia's greatest writer of fables was Ivan Krylov. His works, typically Russian in

their everyday language and humorous characterizations, ridiculed ignorance and vanity.

### **The age of Romanticism**

Romanticism, which originated in Germany and England, stressed the full expression of emotions in literature. The movement developed as a revolt against the logic and formality used by Classical writers. Romantic characteristics began to appear in Russian literature during the late 1700's. But Romanticism did not become a significant influence until the early 1800's.

**Sentimentalism**, one of the strongest early Romantic trends, came to Russia from Europe in the 1790's. The followers of this movement emphasized the importance of feelings and imagination. However, the sentimentalists continued to use Classical forms in poetry.

The leading Russian sentimentalist was Nikolai Karamzin. His *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (written in 1789 and 1790) is filled with the excitement of his trip to the West and his meetings with famous writers. "Poor Liza" (1792) is a popular tale about a peasant girl who was abandoned by her lover, a nobleman. Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* (1816-1829) is still an important work of Russian history.

**Preromanticism.** Another group of writers of the early 1800's are known as Preromantics. They showed a greater interest in nature and more love of moods than did the sentimentalists. Preromantics continued to use forms of Classicism in their works. Leading Preromantic writers included Vasili Zhukovsky and Konstantin Batyushkov. Zhukovsky, a gifted poet, translated works of several

German and English Romantics. Batyushkov was famous primarily for his *elegies* (sad poems on love and death). He also wrote sad, passionate lyrics.

**Early Romanticism.** A new generation of poets appeared during the 1820's, marking the beginning of the *Golden Age* of Russian poetry. These poets, like the Preromantics, combined Classical forms with Romantic sentiments. However, the early Romantics showed a greater concern for individual freedom and an interest in a broader range of subjects. The poets of the Golden Age were strongly influenced by two English authors, William Shakespeare and Lord Byron.



Russia's greatest lyric poet, and the leading writer of early Romanticism, was Alexander S. Pushkin. His poems are distinguished by their economical but very expressive language. Pushkin's concise style makes his works difficult to translate, or to be appreciated in any language except Russian. Pushkin's

narrative poems deal with the place of human beings in society. Many of his main characters, such as the title hero of *Eugene Onegin* (1825-1832), are unable to find a purpose in life. They end up bored and insensitive to love.

In 1825, Pushkin wrote *Boris Godunov*, a historical drama in blank verse. It was an attempt to introduce Shakespeare's type of chronicle play into Russian drama. "The Bronze Horseman" (written in 1833), one of

Pushkin's greatest narrative poems, centres on Peter the Great's Westernization of Russia and its effect on ordinary Russians. The work tells of both the glorious and tragic consequences of his grand design for Russia.

Pushkin also wrote a novel and several stories. His novel, *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), resembled the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, a Scottish Romantic. One of Pushkin's best stories, "The Queen of Spades" (1834), is about a gambler who goes mad after failing to win a fortune at cards.

Other poets of the Golden Age included Yevgeny Baratynsky, Baron Anton Delvig, and Wilhelm Kuchelbecker. Baratynsky became famous for his precise, original style. His narrative poems include *Eda* (1825), *The Ball* (1828), and *The Gypsy Girl* (1842).

Another important writer of the 1820's was Alexander Griboyedov. His most famous work, *Woe from Wit* (1825), is a satirical comedy written in rhymed verses. The hero, Chatsky, like Pushkin's Eugene Onegin, is unable to fit into the society of his time. Onegin and Chatsky became known as "superfluous" or useless men whose weak natures prevent them from pursuing constructive goals. Later writers used this character type to describe Russian nobles who could not provide strong liberal leadership in support of political and social reforms. The superfluous man appeared in Russian literature several times during the 1800's and early 1900's.

**Late Romanticism** featured a new freedom of form and style, and an admiration for human feelings and passions. This movement, which began in the 1830's, also stressed

the deep significance of dreams, visions, and fantasies. Political and moral corruption were the themes of some late Romantic Russian literature. However, censorship had become severe under Czar Nicholas I, whose rule began in 1825.



There was strict censorship of all literary works critical of Russian society, especially serfdom. The leading writers of this period included Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Tyutchev, and Nikolai V. Gogol.

Lermontov was an outstanding poet and novelist. His lyrics expressed intense frustration and boredom with life in Russia. In several of his poems, Lermontov dreamed of an unattainable paradise. Pride and unrestrained desire cause the hero of *The Demon* (about 1839) to lose this ideal state. Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Times* (1840) was the first psychological novel in Russian literature. The hero, Pechorin, is another superfluous man. He wastes his life in senseless adventures because the strictness of Russian social and political life keeps him from any useful activities except his military duties.

Tyutchev, another brilliant Romantic poet, wrote on such themes as the place of human beings in the universe, the limits of their understanding of nature, and their ability to communicate through language. His poems include "Silentium" (1830), "A Dream at Sea" (1833), and "Nature Is Not What You Think" (1836).

Gogol was one of Russia's greatest writers. His early works give colourful descriptions of life in Ukraine, where he was born. *Taras Bulba* (1835), a historical novel, praises the past glory of Ukrainian Cossacks. Literary critics regarded many of Gogol's later works as political satires. But Gogol's main objective was to make fun of humanity's spiritual weaknesses. The characters in *The Inspector-General* (1836) represent common human vices. "The Overcoat" (1842), the story of a pathetic copy clerk, protests the spiritual poverty of human beings. *Dead Souls* (1842), though never completed, is one of Gogol's most brilliant satires. The hero of the story travels around Russia buying up titles to dead serfs whose names are still in the census. He plans to use the titles in a swindle. This tale, an attack on moral corruption, was misinterpreted by readers of Gogol's day as a criticism of political corruption.

### **The age of Realism**

In the 1840's, Realism emerged as an important literary trend in Russia. Its followers were influenced partly by the teachings of Vissarion Belinsky, a leading literary critic. Belinsky believed Realistic literature should give an honest picture of life and, at the same time, preach social reform. His view that literature should serve the needs of society became an established principle in Russian criticism during much of the 1800's. This view continued to influence the choice of themes and their treatment in Russian prose in the 1900's.

**Early Realism.** The literature of the 1840's and the 1850's had both Romantic and Realistic traits. Early

Realists combined Romantic sentiments and feelings with Realistic portrayals of social and political problems.

Ivan Turgenev, an outstanding novelist and playwright, displayed a deep understanding of Russian society and people. *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852) helped stir up public sympathy for Russia's serfs. Turgenev described the serfs as kind and dignified, and portrayed landowners as crude and insensitive. In *Rudin* (1856), Turgenev shows the traditional superfluous man as a frustrated liberal. *Fathers and Sons* (1862) was superior to Turgenev's other works in dramatic content and in character analysis. It shows the *nihilists* (radical Russian youths of the early 1860's) as strong-willed, and disrespectful of authority and tradition. They want to change Russian society, but the country is not yet ready for a revolution. The hero, Bazarov, dies inactive and frustrated. One of Turgenev's favourite themes was young love, the subject of *Asya* (1858) and *First Love* (1860). In *First Love*, a boy experiences his first crush, only to learn that the girl is his father's mistress. Turgenev's most successful play, *A Month in the Country*, tells a similar story. A girl and her guardian compete for the love of a young tutor.

The novelist Ivan Goncharov tried to convince Russian liberals that only practical action, not sentiment, leads to social reform. In *Oblomov* (1859), the superfluous man is portrayed as a well-bred landowner, Oblomov, a charming and intelligent man whose almost total failure to act keeps him from achieving his youthful dreams. After this novel, Russians began to refer to inactivity within the privileged class as "Oblomovism."

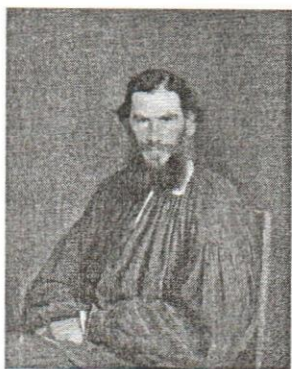
Alexander N. Ostrovsky, one of the most popular and most productive Russian dramatists, wrote plays criticizing the middle classes. His use of everyday Russian speech gives his work strong national appeal. Ostrovsky's villains, products of the merchant world, are greedy, dishonest, and dominating. In *Poverty Is No Crime* (1854), a selfish businessman decides that his daughter must marry a wealthy swindler. Ostrovsky's greatest work, *The Storm* (1860), tells the tragic story of a merchant's wife who is driven to suicide by her domineering mother-in-law.

Sergey Aksakov, another leading writer of the 1850's, based his vivid descriptions of nature and people on childhood experiences. Unlike other Russian Realists, Aksakov neither attacked nor defended Russian society in his writings. His works include *Family Chronicle* (1856) and *The Childhood of Bagrov the Grandson* (1858).



**The 1860's and 1870's** brought an end to Romanticism in Russian literature. Russian Realists began to write about social conditions in their works. A simplified prose replaced the elegant style of Romanticism. The novel became the principal literary form. Many novels had vivid characters but little plot structure.

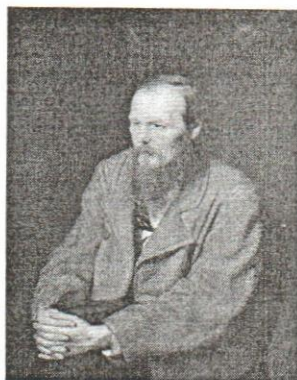
Count Leo N. Tolstoy, perhaps Russia's greatest writer of Realistic fiction, produced his major novels during the 1860's and 1870's. Tolstoy discarded Romantic values of heroism and spiritual love. Instead, he showed a deep



concern for the natural stages of human development, such as birth, marriage, and death. Tolstoy's magnificent novel *War and Peace* (1869) captures the colour and fire of the French invasion of Russia in 1812. But the novel also opposes war and reveals Tolstoy's desire for a quiet life in close harmony with nature. In *Anna Karenina* (1875-

1877), Tolstoy attacked romantic love as self-indulgence, and encouraged a sense of moral duty and love of family instead.

Fyodor Dostoevsky was another great Russian novelist. His works are famous for their dramatic portrayals of inner conflicts. *Crime and Punishment* (1866), Dostoevsky's most exciting novel, describes the drama of a murderer who is tortured by his conscience. The hero is spiritually redeemed when he finally confesses his crime and



accepts the punishment. *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879-1880), Dostoevsky's last and greatest novel, tells about the murder of an evil man by one of his four sons. The symbolic redemption of the other sons represents the author's faith in the saving power of God.

**Late Realism.** Alexander III, who became Czar in 1881, opposed many of the reforms made by his father, Alexander II. Themes of despair and bitterness, resulting from the Czar's harsh rule, appeared in Russian writings of the 1880's and 1890's. Stories and plays became the major literary forms of late Realism.



Anton Chekhov was a leading writer of short stories and plays. Many of his works deal with the boredom and frustration of life. "Ionych" (1898) tells the story of a sensitive, idealistic doctor who becomes lazy and conceited as he grows older. *The Three Sisters* (1901) describes a family whose members are too weak-

willed to change their dull lives.

Maxim Gorki, the last of the great Russian Realists, wrote novels, plays, and stories. His early works, reflecting his Communist philosophy, describe the terrible poverty of the lower classes. Gorki's most famous play, *The Lower Depths* (1902), dramatizes the miserable lives of the inhabitants of a flophouse. A frequent theme of Gorki's later works was the decline of the upper middle class, shown in the novel *The Artamanovs' Business* (1925). Gorki also wrote a multivolume autobiography and published reminiscences of his meetings and friendships with leading Russian authors.

## Literary revival

A spirit of revolution spread throughout Russia from the 1890's until the 1920's. This period was known as the Silver Age. This period of social upheaval and transition in Russia was also a time of tremendous vitality and renewal in the arts, especially literature.

**Symbolism** in Russian poetry and fiction began in the mid-1890's. The Symbolists opposed the Realistic portrayal of everyday life and its problems. Russian writers, particularly Tyutchev, Lermontov, and Dostoevsky, and several authors of Western Europe inspired the Symbolists. Followers of the movement returned to the dreams and fantasies of the Romantics. Some concentrated on religious and philosophical theories. Leading Symbolists included Alexander Blok and Andrey Bely.

Blok, a poet, expressed his religious ideals in his early works. His later poetry describes the ugliness of the world. Blok's most famous work, *The Twelve* (1918), interprets the *Bolshevik* (Communist) revolution of 1917 as a spiritual purification of Russia.

Bely was an outstanding novelist and also a poet. His *St. Petersburg* (1913-1914) pictures the Russian capital as a place where Eastern and Western philosophies meet and conflict with almost explosive violence.

Leonid Andreyev combined elements of Realism and Symbolism in his works. He wrote sensational stories with themes of madness, and terror. Examples of this style include the short story "The Red Laugh" (1904) and the play *He Who Gets Slapped* (1915).

Another leading writer of the early 1900's was Ivan Bunin. Although he was not a Symbolist, his work, dominated by themes of love and death, resembles the literature of the Symbolists. Bunin's masterpiece, "The Gentleman from San Francisco" (1915), is a story about an American millionaire who works too hard and is later unable to enjoy life.

**Post-Symbolism** grew out of Symbolism and represented a revolt against the vague, philosophical works of the Symbolists. It began in Russia around 1910. The *Acmeists*, one of the most important Post-Symbolist groups, began to write poetry that focused on the present world. They used clear-cut images and more concrete language. Leading Acmeists included Nikolai Gumilev, Osip Mandelstam, and Anna Akhmatova. A radical Post-Symbolist group called the *Futurists* departed from traditional poetic themes and diction. Vladimir Mayakovsky, the most famous Futurist and later an outspoken Communist, shocked readers with his strong language and unusual imagery.

Boris Pasternak, one of the greatest poets of the 1900's, created highly original poetry about nature and life. He achieved world fame with his epic novel *Doctor Zhivago* (1957). Marina Tsvetaeva, another great poet, experimented with Russian sounds and words. She strongly influenced the younger generation of Russian poets.

### **Soviet literature**

The Communist Revolution of 1917 marked the beginning of a new era in Russian literature. The government greatly

tightened censorship, which had existed under the Czars. Many writers who opposed the Soviet government left the country or were imprisoned or executed. Those who remained had to serve the interests of the state and were not allowed to criticize the government. Soviet writers were told to describe Soviet life as happy and prosperous.

**From 1917 to 1920.** Following the revolution, literary activity decreased considerably. Publishing houses closed, and book production and sales dropped. Newspapers and magazines became political tools of the Communist Party. Printing presses were taken over by the state. The government encouraged the development of a *proletarian* literature to express the interests of Russian workers and peasants. However, few works of value were written during this period.

**The period of rebirth** in Russian literature occurred during the 1920's. The poor writing of the first few years of Communist rule resulted in a more lenient government policy. The government restored a certain amount of literary freedom, and reopened publishing houses. It also permitted literary criticism to resume. A new group of poets and novelists called *fellow travellers* appeared in the Soviet Union. Isaak Babel wrote a series of stories called *Red Cavalry* (1926) about the horrible conditions resulting from war. Leonid Leonov, inspired by Dostoevsky, told about the psychological effects of the revolution on the Russian people. His greatest novels are *The Badgers* (1924) and *The Thief* (1927). Alexei N. Tolstoy wrote *Road to Calvary*, a three-novel work consisting of *The Sisters* (1921), *1918* (1927), and *Bleak Morning* (1941).

The novels deal with Russian intellectuals and members of the Russian middle class from 1914 to 1920.

**The period of industrial literature** began in 1928 with the Soviet Union's First Five-Year Plan. This plan aimed in part to build up Soviet industry. Writers were expected to produce works concerning economic problems. During this period, *factory* and *production novels* appeared in the Soviet Union. They dealt with such subjects as the building of a factory or the organization of collective farming. Most of this literature is inferior, but a few works, such as *Time, Forward!* (1932) by Valentin Kataev, are interesting and skilfully written.

**The period of Socialist Realism** started in the early 1930's. The government, headed by Joseph Stalin, banned all private literary organizations and established the Union of Soviet Writers. The union, which all professional writers were required to join, endorsed the



newly developed theory of *Socialist Realism*. According to this doctrine, the main purpose of literature is to portray the building of a socialist society. The government-controlled union ordered Soviet authors to produce optimistic works that were easy to understand and similar to the style of such writers as Tolstoy and Gorki. Censorship eliminated undesirable material from manuscripts. By forcing writers to meet the requirements of Socialist Realism, the government gained more control

over literature. Writers who ignored the doctrine were expelled from the union. This meant the end of their careers. Some writers were imprisoned.

Historical literature became common during the 1930's and early 1940's. One of the finest works about the revolution and the civil war was *The Quiet Don* (1928-1940) by Mikhail A. Sholokhov. This long epic novel tells the story of a young Cossack whose happiness is destroyed by the tragedy of war. Sholokhov received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1965.



**World War II.** During the war against Germany from 1941 to 1945, the Soviet government gave writers somewhat greater freedom. Soviet leaders were more interested in fighting the Germans than in building socialism. Themes of individual suffering and death dominated this period. *Days and Nights* (1943-1944) by Konstantin Simonov was one of many patriotic war novels that appeared. The government reestablished strict controls over literature after the war. It also forced several leading authors out of the Union of Soviet Writers. These writers included Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko, a noted humorist and satirist.

**Modern Soviet literature.** The death of Stalin in 1953 was followed by another period of relaxed restrictions in Soviet life and literature. This change became known as *The Thaw*, the name of a short novel written by Ilya

Ehrenburg in 1954. In contrast to the policy of describing Soviet life as happy and optimistic, Ehrenburg wrote about frustrated, lonely people. Strict censorship returned after the publication in 1962 of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. This short novel describes Soviet labour camps during the tyranny of Stalin's time.

A number of young liberal writers appeared in the Soviet Union during the 1960's. Two popular young poets were Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Andrey Voznesensky. Both supported freedom and creativity in Soviet life. The main theme of Voznesensky's work is self-analysis through personal experience. Several talented young prose writers, including Vasily Aksyonov, wrote about the shortcomings of Soviet life. Vasily Shukshin and other writers describe the hardships suffered by collective farmers.

Censorship in the Soviet Union prevented many works from being published, though typewritten or mimeographed copies of some of the manuscripts were circulated secretly. Some Soviet writers published works abroad that had not been officially published in their own country. In 1957, Boris Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* appeared in Italy. Pasternak was awarded the 1958 Nobel Prize for his works, including this novel. He refused the prize because of pressure from the Soviet government.

Andrey Sinyavsky, writing under the name of Abram Tertz, wrote several short stories that were published abroad beginning in 1959. Sinyavsky's works, including *The Trial Begins*, describe the terrors of life in a police state. Sinyavsky was arrested in 1966 and imprisoned in a labour camp until 1971. In 1973, he was allowed to

emigrate to France. *The First Circle* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn was published in the West in 1968. This novel tells about the life of political prisoners in a research institute during the Stalin era. Solzhenitsyn won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970 and was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1974 but returned to live in 1994.

From 1970 to 1980, political restrictions increased the difficulty of publishing in the Soviet Union. But a number of writers continued to criticize Soviet society by describing the selfishness and hypocrisy they saw in the country. Valentin Rasputin wrote about the decay of morals and standards in rural areas. Vladimir Voinovich wrote a humorous satire of Soviet life in *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (1975). Yuri Trifonov dealt with moral dilemmas faced by Soviet intellectuals in such works as *Another Life* (1975) and *Old Man* (1978).

In the mid-1980's, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced a policy of *glasnost* (openness) that greatly relaxed censorship and led to freer public expression of information and opinion. The Soviet Union began publishing works of important Soviet writers, such as Akhmatova and Pasternak. Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* was published in the Soviet Union for the first time in 1988.



The post-Gorbachev period of political transition in Russia saw the massive publication of formerly undesirable writers. They include Tsvetaeva, Mandelshtam, and Solzhenitsyn, Nicolas Berdyaev and Vasily Rozanov. A talented group of women writers gained popularity, including Liudmila Petrushevskaja and Aleksandra Tolstaya. In 1969, Venedikt Erofeev wrote a short novel, translated as *Moscow to the End of the Line*, that became a cult favourite in the new Russia. The book contains the reflections of an imaginative alcoholic on a short train ride and seems to symbolize the odyssey of a lost Russia in search of herself. The era of Soviet literature ended in 1991 when the Soviet Union broke up into many independent countries.

### **Modern Russian literature**

Russian literature today is marked by dynamism and diversity, though no clear trends have emerged since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Several newer writers have gained prominence. Vladimir Makanin has written novels that treat the guilt of Russian intellectuals during the Soviet period. Viktor Erofeev has produced fiction dealing with violence, horror, absurdity, and power used for evil. Notable newer poets include Olga Sedakova, David Samoilov, and Viktor Krivulin.

## Nikolai Gogol

Great Russian novelist, dramatist, satirist, founder of the so-called critical realism in Russian literature, best-known for his novel *MERTVYE DUSHI* I-II (1842, *Dead Souls*). Gogol's prose is characterized by imaginative power and linguistic playfulness. As an exposé of the defects of human character Gogol could be called the Hieronymus Bosch of Russian literature.



Nikolay Gogol was born in Sorochintsi, Ukraine, and grew up on his parent's country estate. His real surname was *Ianovskii*, but the writer's grandfather had taken the name 'Gogol' to claim a noble ancestry. Gogol's father was an educated and gifted man, who wrote plays, poems, and sketches in Ukrainian. Gogol started to write while in high school. He attended Poltava boarding school (1819-21) and high school (1821-28). In 1829 he settled in St. Petersburg. Gogol worked at minor governmental jobs and wrote occasionally for periodicals. Between the years 1831 and 1834 he taught history at the Patriotic Institute and worked as a private tutor.

In 1831 Gogol met Aleksandr Pushkin who greatly influenced his choice of literary material, especially his 'Dikinka tales', which were based on Ukrainian folklore. Their friendship lasted until the great poet's death. After failure as an assistant lecturer of world history at the

University of St. Petersburg (1834-35), Gogol became a full-time writer. Under the title *Mirgorod* (1835) Gogol published a new collection of stories, beginning with 'Old-World Landowners', which described the decay of the old way of life.

*St. Petersburg Stories* (1835) examined disorders of mind and social relationships. 'The Nose' was about a man who loses his nose and which tries to live its own life. 'The Diary of a Madman' asked why is it that "all the best things in life, they all go to the Equerries or the generals?" 'The Overcoat' contrasted humility and meekness with the rudeness of the 'important personage'.

Gogol published in 1836 several stories in Pushkin's journal *Sovremennik*, and in the same year appeared his famous play, *The Government Inspector*. It told a simple tale of a young civil servant, Khlestakov, who finds himself stranded in a small provincial town. By mistake, he is taken by the local officials to be a government inspector, who is visiting their province incognito. Khlestakov happily adapts to his new role and exploits the situation. His true identity is revealed but then arrives the real inspector. Gogol masterfully creates with a few words people, places, things, and lets them disappear in the flow of the story.

Its first stage production was in St Petersburg, given in the presence of the tsar. The tsar, as he left his box after the première, dropped the comment: "Hmm, what a play! Gets at everyone, and most of all at me!" Gogol, who was always sensitive about reaction to his work, fled Russia for Western Europe. He visited Germany, Switzerland, and France and settled then in Rome.

In Rome Gogol wrote his major work, *The Dead Souls*. Gogol claimed that the story was suggested by Pushkin in a conversation in 1835. It depicted the adventures Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov, who arrives in a provincial town to buy 'dead souls', dead serfs. By selling these 'souls' with a cheaply-bought lands, Chichikov planned to make a huge profit. He meets local landowners and departs the in a hurry, when rumors start spread about him. During the last decade of his life, Gogol struggled to continue the story and depict Chichikov's fall and redemption.

Except for a short visits to Russia in 1839-40 and 1841-42, Gogol was abroad for twelve years. The first edition of Gogol's collected works was published in 1842. It made him one of the most popular Russian writers. Two years before his return, Gogol had published *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* (1847), in which he upheld the autocratic tsarist regime and the patriarchal Russian way of life. The book arose disappointment among radicals who had seen Gogol's works as examples of social criticism. In the play ZHENITBA (1842) nearly everybody lies and the protagonist, Podgolesin, cannot make up his mind about marriage. He hesitates, agrees, then withdraws his promise, the life is full of cheating, but when people jeer at each other, they actually tell the truth.

In his later life Gogol burned sequels for *Dead Souls*, just 10 days before he died on the verge of madness on the 4th of March 1852. Gogol had refused to take any food and various remedies were employed to make him eat - spirits were poured over his head, hot loaves applied to his person and leeches attached to his nose. Rumors arise from time to time that Gogol was buried alive.

## **The Government Inspector**

The Government Inspector is a hilarious comedy about mistaken identity and council corruption in a small town. The premise is simple. A corrupt Mayor and his officials are alarmed to hear rumours of the impending arrival of a government inspector. Evidently this fellow will be travelling "incognito". Thrown into a panic, the Mayor and his officials desperately struggle to stifle public dissatisfaction whilst deflecting the blame for their many and various misdemeanours onto each other. But who is the government inspector and where is he hiding? He could, of course, be anyone. It is brought to their notice that an apparently penniless rake and his servant happen to be staying at the local inn. Despite the fact that they are unable to pay their bill, this unlikely couple suddenly find themselves being treated like royalty by the sycophantic mayor and his cronies. "The Government Inspector" eventually rides away a good deal richer, having sampled for free the best hospitality the town could muster, including not just the finest food and drink, but also the feverishly competitive adoration of both the Mayor's forceful wife, and his seemingly impressionable daughter. The truth of their dreadful mistake is finally revealed to the town. Finally, just as the humiliated Mayor strives to apportion blame in order to restore some semblance of credibility, the arrival of the real inspector is announced - to the collective dismay of the assembled dignitaries.

## THEMES

### CORRUPTION

There is no doubt that this town's officials are corrupt. The Mayor and officials all accept bribes. The most detailed description of the bribery comes from the townspeople when they come to complain to Hlestakov. They tell how they are forced to give large gifts to the Mayor: "We have always done what is expected: dresses for his wife and daughter, presents at Easter, we don't mind that! But that doesn't satisfy him!". One merchant says that the Mayor comes into the store and takes anything he comes across. In fact, the Mayor celebrates two name-days, so that he gets double the number of presents. The locksmith's wife objects that the tailor's son was excused from military service because his parents "persuaded" the Mayor to let him go, implying that they bribed him. The draper woman's son was not made to go because they sent his wife three lengths of linen.

However, when the merchants come with petitions against the Mayor for corruption, they bring gifts to Hlestakov, whom they believe to be the Government Inspector. They offer him sugar and wine, but Hlestakov claims: "Don't think of it! I never take bribes! But if you could offer me a loan, say, 300 roubles, that would be alright". The merchants not only comply, but they give him an extra 200 roubles and the silver tray they deliver the money on. This is very hypocritical and ironic. They complain that the Mayor is corrupt and yet they insist on bribing Hlestakov. Their hope is that a one-time bribe with the Government Inspector will help stop the constant exploitation by the Mayor.

The other officials are also extremely corrupted. The Judge excuses himself by saying he only accepts little, harmless bribes: "I freely admit I take bribes, but what sort of bribes? Borzoi puppies, that's all!". The Mayor shows himself to be hypocritical once again when he responds: "Whether it's Borzoi puppies or something else, it's still bribery". The Mayor is scolding the Judge for an activity that he himself is guilty of committing. The Mayor then claims that at least he goes to Church every Sunday and believes in God. Somehow, in his mind, this makes up for his sins and failings. Later, he criticizes a constable for taking a whole roll of cloth, telling him it is "more than your rank entitles you to!". This shows the mentality of the Mayor. The amount that one deserves in bribes and gifts is proportional to his rank.

The Charity Commissioner feeds the patients at his hospitals rotting cabbage instead of the more expensive oatmeal gruel. He never got them the new nightcaps that he was supposed to. The Postmaster opens and reads letter that come his way and thinks nothing of it. Even yet another example of corruption, the Mayor plans to lie if questioned about a chapel that was supposed to have been built years before and say it burned down. It is likely that the money for the chapel only found its way into the Mayor's pocket. Overall, the town is poorly run and the officials do not do their jobs. They use their positions to benefit themselves as much as possible but do not worry about improving their community.

They expect bribes to work on the Government Inspector to compensate for their bad performance. Hlestakov is more than happy to accept the bribes, but prefers to call them loans and promises to repay them

upon returning home. The officials humour him. Each one, in turn, goes to see him separately and gives him money. They believe that they can protect themselves from trouble and doing a bad job if they pay Hlestakov off.

## **DECEPTION**

There are two kinds of deceptions going on in this play. The Mayor and officials attempt to deceive the Government Inspector. They try to make things look better on the surface without really improving conditions. For example, the Mayor tells the constables to “put up a good appearance. Then pull down that fence by the cobbler’s as quick as you can, and put poles with markers as if it was all going to be levelled. The more pulling down you can arrange the better; it shows the town authorities are active”. The first act is largely based on Mayor telling each of the officials what they need to do to make a good appearance. The suggestions are all superficial and do not really address the needs of the institutions. The officials and Mayor are trying to deceive the Government Inspector that things are not as bad as they are. The Mayor suggests new, clean nightcaps for the patients at the hospital. The courthouse should be rid of the geese and its awful smell. The offices there are “full of all kinds of rubbish...I know you’re very fond of hunting,” the Mayor tells the Judge, “but why not tidy it up till this inspector’s been, then you can put it all back if you want to!”. The suggestions are temporary solutions to get past the government inspections and are not meant to have a lasting, long-term, positive effect.

Hlestakov, on the other hand, is mistaken for someone he is not. At first he does not realize this and thinks the fanfare is for him. He is honest at first, telling the Mayor that without his assistance in paying his bill he "should have had to remain here a long time. I had no idea how I could pay my bill". Then, he truthfully answers: "I am going to my own estate in the province of Saratov...My father has sent for me. The old man is annoyed that I haven't been promoted in the service before now". The Mayor believes whole-heartedly that Hlestakov is lying so as to remain incognito.

Later, though, he lies and exaggerates. But did not come to the town to intentionally con the people. He is an opportunist, taking advantage of the situation. When everyone's eyes are on him the first evening, he becomes a big performer and puts on a show for them. He describes a fantastic and romantic life in Petersburg. His lies include: that the chief of his department often invites him to dinner; that he has a man who just writes letters for him; that it is impossible for him to pass unnoticed; that he was taken for the Commander-in-Chief himself; that he writes novels and magazine articles overnight; that he hosts extravagant balls and plays whist with important governmental officials (54-6). All that comes in just three pages of dialogue! Hlestakov behaves like he is on stage, not that he is deliberately tricking the people.

The two types of deceit expressed in this play are different. The motivations of the officials and Hlestakov vary. The officials are premeditated and intentional. Hlestakov's motivation is grandeur and attention. As the play progresses, however, Hlestakov begins to exploit the confusion and misunderstanding for his own gain, taking

loans from almost all the officials. He never explicitly says that he is the Government Inspector, but does not correct the misunderstanding.

## **AUTHORITY**

Power relationships take on a variety of forms in this play. The Mayor exploits the merchants and takes bribes (see the discussion under the Corruption Theme). Since this is how he treats those under him, he expects the Government Inspector to accept bribes as well. The officials in the play all have authority over their departments or institutions and, in general, do not use it for good. They use their authority to extract money and gifts from those beneath them. The Government Inspector and officials from Petersburg are to be feared and they want to please them so as not to get into trouble. The motivation is never to do a good job or work hard, but to try to get away with as much as possible without getting into trouble. The Constables, who are supposed to maintain order and peace, are frequently drunk and do not set a good example. The townspeople who are mistreated attempt to get the Government Inspector to get involved on their behalf and remedy the situation. However, it is likely that the more powerful bureaucrats are just as corrupted. The government in Russia at this time is not a democracy, so there is not accountability or transparency. The Government Inspector is supposed to be a reliable source, but because he is human, he is tempted by the same things that the Mayor and other officials are (like bribes and personal benefits).

There is also the mother-daughter relationship to consider. Anna is harsh and cruel to her daughter, who is

actually smarter and nicer than she is. Anna mimics her, makes her cry, and says mean things to her. Marya, who is only eighteen years old, takes it and suffers. Anna disagrees with Marya frequently, but is usually proven wrong by her more intelligent daughter. One example of this is when Marya spots Dobchinsky in the lane, but Anna insists that it is not him. When he comes closer, she sees Marya is right but cannot concede that easily: "Yes! Well, I can see now. It is Dobchinsky! What are you arguing about?". She also scolds her daughter when she offers the proper name of the author of a book that Hlestakov claims to have written. In general, the power all lies in the hands of the mother, while the knowledge and intellect is possessed by the daughter.

The master-servant relationship also reflects a power dynamic. Yosif is wiser about money matters, but he is not the one with the money. He cannot make his master use his money sensibly. We first met Yosif as he is laying on Hlestakov's bed, criticizing his master's frequent waste of money. We learn a lot about Hlestakov's character from these musings. Hlestakov sends Yosif to ask for food because he is uncomfortable doing it himself since he hasn't paid his bill. Yosif doesn't want to, but has no other choice. Hlestakov tells him to "go down there," but Yosif says, "I'd rather not." Hlestakov is upset: "How dare you! You oaf!". Yosif then precedes to offer a very reasonable account of what will happen if he asks for more food: that nothing will happen because he hasn't paid and there's been an order not to take Hlestakov anymore food. In this exchange, we can see that Hlestakov sends Yosif to do a task he really doesn't want to do. Later, we see the

two interact again when Yosif convinces Hlestakov that they should leave before they are found out.

The power relations in this play tend to portray the weaker people as having more intellect and as being more noble.

## **DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS**

Hlestakov's dream of being important and well-treated comes true when the townspeople mistake him for the government inspector. He tells tales of his grand life in Petersburg and they believe him. The first scene in which we meet Hlestakov, he daydreams about this kind of treatment. "It would have been devilish fine to go home in my own chaise, and go visiting the landowners, and drive up to the food of the steps, wit the lanterns burning, and Yosif in livery perched up behind! I can just imagine everybody getting excited, and asking, 'Who is it? What is it?' And the lacquey would go in 'Ivan Alexandrovitch Hlestakov, from Petersburg'. He feels like his dreams have come true when he is mistaken for the Government Inspector, given great respect and the best hospitality. For a little while he might even begin to feel that the lies he is telling are actually truths. He basks in the attention and it makes him even more bold and outrageous in his fabrications. He is able to leave town before he has to admit that he is not the grand person that they think he is. He leaves with the best, fastest team of horses and his pockets full of money.

Anna wants a Petersburg gent to pay attention to her and Hlestakov does this by paying her compliments and flattering her. He flirts with her excessively: "nothing in the world is too good for you" and "It is you I love! My

life is hanging by a thread! If you will not requite my undying love, then, I am unworthy to walk the earth! With heart aglow, I beg your hand!". She wants to move to Petersburg and socialize with rich, important people. "I think I shall make our house the smartest in Petersburg! I shall have scent in my boudoir so strong it will make everyone screw up their eyes when they come in!". She considers the town "a little too rustic" now that they are to move up in the world with the marriage of their daughter to an important government official. She calls Korobin a "nobody" and has already assumed an elitist attitude.

The Mayor wants to be a general and thinks that his daughter's marriage to Hlestakov will bring him that. He wants to wear a sash and be treated with respect and honor. "There's something about being a general! If you happen to travel anywhere, adjutants and orderlies gallop ahead to call for horses...they all have to wait until the general is attended to! Mixing with all the councillors and capitals, and not turning a hair!". The life, he believes, is far better as a general than as a mayor. He gets very excited and is looking forward to the future prosperity that he believes his daughter's marriage will bring.

In the end, however, none of these things come true. The characters dilute themselves into thinking that they can have their desires fulfilled, but in reality, the play ends with the people in the same position as before. The only difference is that the officials' money is now in Hlestakov's pocket. Hlestakov may have more money, but he will not receive the grand welcome or visits from prince and princesses that he lied about and ultimately desired. Neither were Anna or the Mayor's dreams fulfilled.

## **Character Analysis**

### **Hlestakov, a junior official from Petersburg**

Hlestakov is a young man, about 23 years old. He is on his way from Petersburg to Saratov, the country town where his family lives. His father has sent him money, but he spends it all on the best food, alcohol, and hotels or loses it in cards games. He left Petersburg two months ago and has been in this town for two weeks. He is staying at the inn, taking everything on credit and creating a large debt he cannot pay back. The innkeeper refuses to give him any food and threatens to report him to the Mayor and have him sent to jail.

This has happened before, we learn from his servant, Yosif. Sometimes he even has to sell his clothes to make money to pay off his debts. When he has money, he spends it all and does not plan for the future. He insists on the best of everything and enjoys good food and drink and gambling. Yosif mimics him: "Run along and book me the best rooms. The best, remember! And order me the very best dinner they have! I can't look at common food, I must have the very best!".

Hlestakov begs the waiter to bring him some food and when the innkeeper finally lets him have food despite his unpaid bill, Hlestakov complains about the quality and quantity he is given.

Though he is only a junior copying clerk, the people of the town believe him to be the Government Inspector, who is supposed to come disguised to evaluate the district,

because he has “elegant appearance but [is] not in official uniform”.

The Mayor goes to see him and he thinks that he is to be arrested because of his debt to the innkeeper. Hlestakov claims he will talk tough (“how dare he!”) but is actually scared; his “voice tails off; he cringes and tries to hide”.

Instead of being imprisoned, Hlestakov is treated like royalty. The Mayor invites him to stay in his home and the officials of the town hurry to him to show respect and loyalty. Hlestakov has always dreamt about being treated so well, as we can see from his imaginings about arriving home “in my own chaise, and...visiting the landowners...with the lanterns burning, and Yosif in livery perched up behind! I can just imagine everybody getting excited and asking, ‘Who is it? What is it?’”.

The townspeople’s mistake is Hlestakov’s dream come true. He is an opportunist, taking advantage of the situation. He is not a professional con artist or deliberate imposter. He puts on a show, behaving theatrically and passionately. With the people’s attention on him, he acts more dramatically, telling more and more extravagant lies. He gets drunk on wine but does not become inarticulate. Instead, he is excitable, happy, and imaginative. He tells stories about having grand balls, attended by high government officials and writing plays and books overnight.

It takes him until Act III, Scene One to figure out what is happening. He takes bribes from many, pretending that they are only a loan, to be paid back once he returns home. He flirts with both Anna and Marya, switching quickly from one to the other. He uses romantic words and

expressions: "If only I could be that necklace, to embrace your lily-white neck!". He is not well-read and misquotes Shakespeare. He tries to move his chair close to Marya, but she doesn't let him, and even kisses her on her shoulder. Then, when Anna appears, he compliments and flatters her.

Hlestakov wants to brag to his friend about what has happened and so writes him a letter. Then he leaves town with all the bribes that he has taken.

### **The Mayor, Anton Antonovitch Skvoznik-Dmuhanovsky**

The Mayor has 30 years experience as a public servant. He is used to being in control and having power to command others. When the Government Inspector comes to town, he gets worried that he will be demoted for poor performance as Mayor. He says he is "not frightened, but a little uneasy". The town is not in good order: the convicts have not been fed, the sergeant's wife was flogged, and the streets are not swept. He orders the "pulling down" of fences and things to make the authorities look more active. This is important to note: the Mayor only begins to suggest improvements because the town is to be inspected and he is worried about his own job, not because he wants it to actually get better. He even tells the Judge to clean his office now, but that he can put everything back as it was once the inspector is gone. He just wants to cover up the bad practices, pass the inspection, and then go back to how things were before.

We see a range of emotions from the Mayor—fear, joy, haughtiness, humility. He is not reflective or analytical. He receives bribes and the merchants tell us that he is exceedingly greedy. Not only does he make them give him presents on one name day, but on two! Yet he

dramatically claims that he takes bribes only because his salary is not enough to live on. He exploits the townspeople and takes whatever he can from them. He is greedy and never satisfied. However, he believes that because he goes to church every Sunday, he is still a good person. His friend calls him a sensible fellow because he doesn't like to lose what swims into his hands.

His greatest aim in life is to be general. When he believes his daughter will be marrying Hlestakov, he begins to dream of greatness and, as the Charity Commissioner says, even starts behaving like one already. He is very upset for having mistaken Hlestakov for the Government Inspector and insults himself for being so stupid: "You dolt! You blockhead! You imbecile!". He claims he has never been fooled in all his years, but that typically he does the swindling. His hopes are dashed when he learns that Hlestakov was not who he thought he was.

### **The Judge, Ammos Fyodorovitch Lyapkin-Tyapkin**

The Judge is the most cultured and educated of the officials, yet he has only read five or six books his whole life. He speaks in a deep voice and gives his words great weight. He is told he has the gift of oratory like Cicero. He was honoured with the Order of St. Vladimir, of the 4<sup>th</sup> degree, and the authorities approved of his work.

The Judge takes bribes, but defends himself by saying that the bribes are only puppies. He contrasts this to the Mayor, who accepts expensive bribes such fur coats for his wife. The Judge does not go to church, but claims that he is following his own beliefs.

The courthouse stinks and is full of garbage. The clerk breeds poultry in the waiting room and drinks strong alcohol. His office is filled with papers, hunting gear, and animal skins. He says that if someone wanted to find something in there, they wouldn't be able to tell truth from lie. He does not take his job seriously or use it to pursue justice. Rather, he is interested in how his position can benefit himself. We also learn that he is having an affair with Dobchinsky's wife.

### **The Charity Commissioner, Artemy Filipovitch Zemlyanika**

The Charity Commissioner feeds the patients in the hospital rotting cabbage instead of good oatmeal gruel. He has not given them new nightcaps and they are so dirty that they look like chimney sweeps. He does not give them expensive medicine. His philosophy is that if a patient dies, he dies. If he gets better, then he'll get better without medicine.

He suggests that they bribe Hlestakov, but tries to get out of it himself by badmouthing the others. He gossips and says that the Judge is having an affair with Dobchinsky's wife and that the School Superintendent puts evil ideas into the minds of the young students. He lies and brags about his management of the hospital, saying that as soon as they arrive, they get better. However, in the end, he gives Hlestakov money begrudgingly.

He is two-faced and does not say what he thinks. Rather, he flatters and compliments. For example, he tells the Mayor his daughter's marriage is the "reward of industry and merit" but then in an aside tells us he really thinks the Mayor is a pig smelling out rich feeding.

### **The School Superintendent, Luka Lukitch Hlopov**

In the first scene, the School Superintendent is dishevelled, with his clothes having been put on in haste. It is 'the morning after' for him, meaning that he has been out drinking the night before.

He is scared of men with higher rank. He shakes and does not know what to say when he is talking to Hlestakov. He tries to smoke a cigar from the wrong end and seems very nervous.

### **The Mayor's Wife, Anna Andreyevna**

A middle aged country woman. She yells at her daughter a lot, telling her that she has taken too long to get ready, but it is likely that she was also the one who made them late. She is nosy, always wanting to know what is happening. She sends someone after her husband to look through a chink in the wall and find out everything. The things most important to her, however, are trivial, like what colour his eyes are and if he has a moustache. She is impatient and excitable.

She is not motherly, but harsh and mean. She mimics her daughter and makes fun of her. She disagrees with Marya frequently, who turns out to be right. For example, Dobchinsky is coming down the lane, but Anna does not believe her and begins to argue with her. Once Anna sees Marya is right, she blames her for arguing, when in reality she was the one who started it.

She is very vain and egotistical. She tries to attract the attention of Hlestakov and constantly flirts with him. She is dramatic and always tries to be the center of attention. For example, she claims responsibility for the marriage between Hlestakov and Marya. When she tells the story

about the proposal, she lies about all the compliments that Hlestakov tells her.

She dreams of going to Petersburg and having a new house and friends of higher rank. She is a social climber, concerned with appearances and status. She calls Korobkin a "nobody" and does not think the Mayor should promise to help him once he is a general.

### **The Mayor's Daughter, Marya Andreyevna**

Marya is more polite, proper, and intelligent than her mother. She is usually right when they disagree. For example, she knows the real author of a book that Hlestakov claims to have written.

She is hesitant and modest when Hlestakov starts showering her with affections. She moves her chair away as he moves his closer and gets upset when he kisses her shoulder. She says that she does not understand love.

She is only 18 and cries when her mother yells at her. Her mother is constantly putting her down and criticizing her. She is accustomed to being ignored by her parents.

### **Postmaster, Ivan Koosmitch Shpyokin**

The Postmaster reads mail as both a precaution and for amusement. He has done it for a long time and so agrees readily when the Mayor asks him to check the mail for complaints. He retells a story about a letter from an official about a ball he attended.

He is nervous and distraught when he comes to tell the officials that Hlestakov was not the Government Inspector. He tells how he was conflicted about reading the mail. One voice in his ear said to open it and another cried out not to. He "shut the shutters, locked the door, blocked the keyhole, and broke the seals with [his] own hand". He is

dramatic when he tells this story, trying to express his fright and worry. He claims he did not read the letter for an hour after opening it because he was so scared.

### **Yosif, Hlestakov's servant**

Yosif does not approve of his master's frivolousness. He criticizes his habit of wasting money and always having to have the best. He speaks slowly and seriously. He helps deceive the townspeople by lying about who his master is. He plays the part well and does not object to ordering the best for Hlestakov now. He uses the Mayor's questions to his advantage, saying that Hlestakov often asks how he has been treated in towns.

### **Town Landowners, Peter Ivanovitch Dobchinsky and Peter Ivanovitch Bobchinsky**

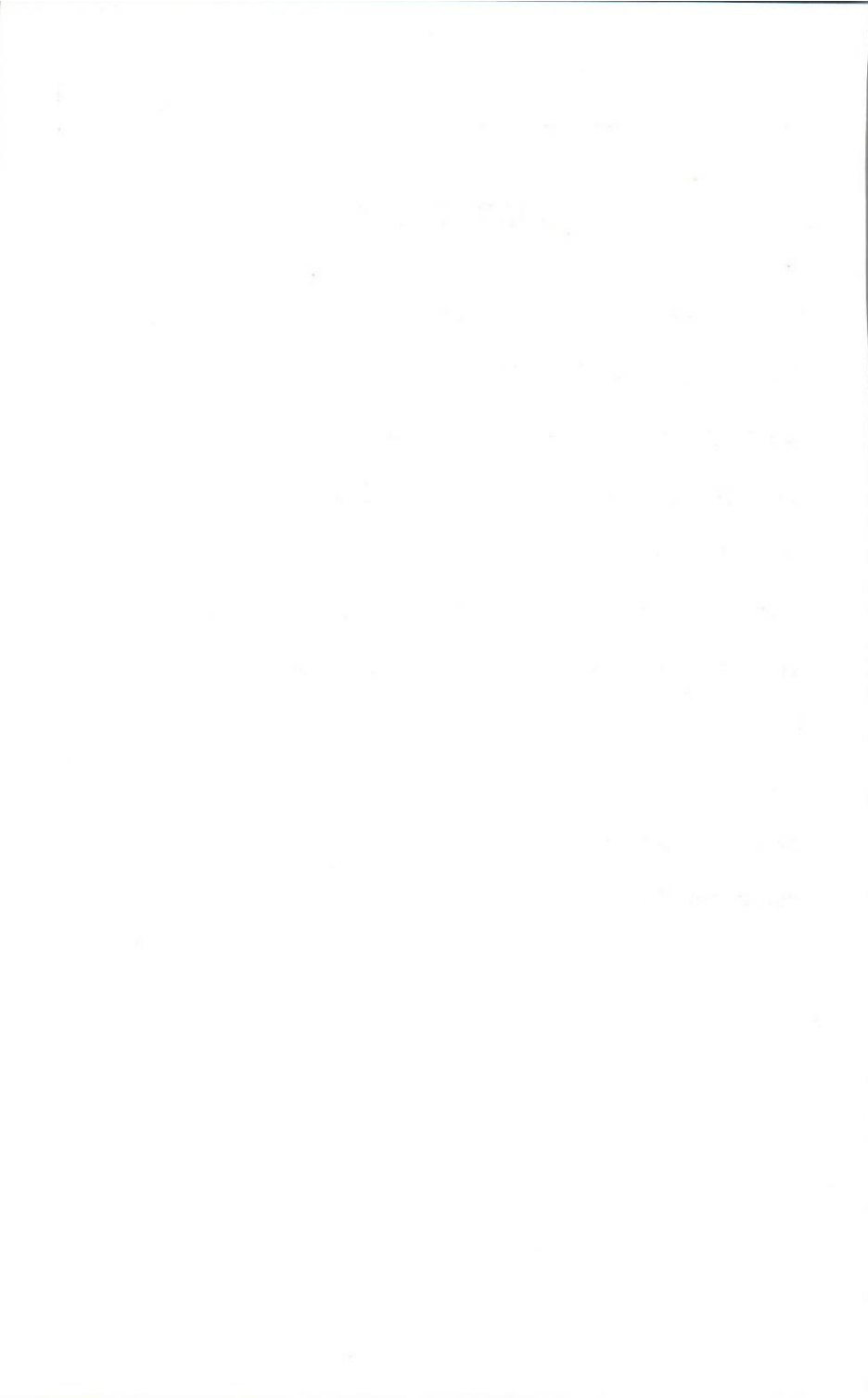
These two are bumbling and awkward. They are clumsy and comical. They try to sit in the same chair at the same time and later try to kiss Anna's hand at the same time. Bobchinsky falls through the door at the inn and hurts his nose.

It is their idea that the man in the inn who doesn't pay his bills must be the Government Inspector. They argue about who will tell their stories and who should get credit for identifying the Government Inspector. In the end, when they are blamed, neither want to be responsible then. They are nosy gossips and the Mayor calls them "Tittle" and "Tattle."

Bobchinsky requests simply to be remembered to important people in Petersburg and Dobchinsky wants his illegitimate son to have his name. They have little money with which to bribe Hlestakov.

## CHARACTERS

- Hlestokov:** A junior official from Petersburg.
- Anton Antonovitch:** The Mayor.
- Ammons Fyodorovitch:** The judge.
- Artemy Filipovitch:** The Charity Commissioner. (CC.)
- Luka Lukitch:** The School Superintendent. (SS)
- Stepan Ilyitch:** The Police Superintendent (PP.)
- Marya Andreyevna:** The Mayor's daughter.
- Ivan Koosmitch:** Postmaster.
- Yosif:** Hlestokov's servant.
- Peter Dobchinsky:** }  
**Peter Bobchinsky:** } Town landowners.



## ACT I

A room in the Mayor's house; the furnishings are approximately Empire, very varied, and reveal some lack of taste, up centre are folding doors, the usual entry; up right a door leading to a bedroom, and right a window, which is practical; up left is a door leading to the rest of the house; there is no open fireplace, but a Russian stove on the wall, left; this looks like a large cabinet or wardrobe, without legs, and warms the room by the heat from its walls; it is painted to represent enamel and is in use, as it is winter; there is a chandelier and also candelabra here and there, but these are only illuminated in Act I and Act III, Sc. I; there is a sofa, a table and numerous chairs. It is morning, about 8 o'clock. At curtain rise the Judge, the Charity Commissioner, and the School Superintendent are discovered, in various attitudes of waiting; they should convey a feeling of uneasy anticipation; the Judge is sprawling in a chair and for him and Hlopov this is clearly 'the morning after'; he strives to focus on his watch but cannot manage it; Hlopov paces nervously; his dress has been rather hastily put on; the Charity Commissioner stands by the window with a more confident air but even he, like the other, glances uneasily now and then at the door, left. Enter the Mayor; he is in uniform; the Judge rises at once and all three pay respectful attention.

**Mayor** : (briskly) Good morning, gentlemen. I asked you here this morning because I

have some very unpleasant news for you. I have found out that an Inspector-General is coming from Petersburg with secret orders to inspect our province, and especially everything to do with our district. He will travel incognito.

**Judge** : What are you saying? From Petersburg?

**CC.** : With secret orders?

**SS.** : And incognito!

**Mayor** : I don't like the business any better than you do. But, you know, I had a premonition of it. I was dreaming all last night about two enormous rats! Upon my soul, I never saw such brutes, huge black ones! They came, sniffed, and went away again! but I'll read you the letter I've just had from Tchmíhov; (to CC.) You know him, Artémy Filípovitch. He writes: 'Dear friend, godfather, and benefactor' (he mutters under his breath, eyes moving swiftly.) Ah! This is it: '.. and I hasten to warn you that an official is coming to inspect the whole province, and especially



our district. I have learned this from an absolutely trustworthy source, although the man passes himself off as a private person. I know you are like all the rest of us and have your little failings, for being a sensible fellow you don't like to lose what swims into your hands". (disconcerted, but looks up saying:) Oh well, we're all friends here. "I warn you to take precautions, as he may arrive any moment, if he hasn't already arrived and is living somewhere incognito. The other day I .." The rest is only about family matters, 'my cousin Anna Kirilovna and her husband are staying with us. He has got very stout and is always playing the fiddle', and so on, and so on. Well, there you are, gentlemen.

**Judge** : But it's extraordinary, simply extraordinary!.

**SS.** : Tell me please, Anton Antonovitch, why this has happened. Why send an Inspector to us? Our town is so far away. Why should they care about us?

**Mayor** : Why? It must be fate. Up to now, God has been good to us, they've pried into other towns; we never had anything like this. Well now, it's our turn.

**Judge** : I believe, Anton Antonovitch, there's some deep, far-reaching political reason for this. I have it! Russia is going to war,

and the Ministry has sent this man to find out .. Yes! To find out if there is treason anywhere!

**Mayor** : What next? And you an intelligent man! Treason in a country town! Is this the frontier? You could gallop from here for three years and not reach a foreign country!

**Judge** : No, you're wrong. Petersburg may be far away, but the authorities don't miss much. They see everything!

**Mayor** : (uneasily) Well, they may, or they may not. That doesn't matter now. This inspector may even now be undoing us all behind our own backs. As to my own special responsibilities, the police, and the general good order of the town, I have already taken some steps, and I advise you to do the same. (swinging round on CC.) Especially you, Artemy Filipovitch; this official will certainly inspect your institutions, and you had better see they look decent! Get some clean nightcaps and bedclothes, the ones you've got are enough for a report in themselves. And the patients might look a little less like chimney sweeps!

**CC.** : That's nothing much. I may be able to find some clean nightcaps.

**Mayor** : And there ought to be some way of

distinguishing the patients. Put a sign over each bed, and get the doctor to put up, in Latin or some such language, the names of the patients when admitted, their diseases, and so on. And make them stop smoking that filthy tobacco for a while, it makes me choke whenever I go in! And get rid of some of the patients; there are far too many. He'll think the doctor doesn't know his business!

**CC.** : Oh! The doctor and I have got things well arranged in the medical line. The more natural your treatment is, the better. We don't bother with expensive medicines! These patients are very simple people! If they die, well! they die! If they get better, they get better! And it would really be very difficult for Hiebner to talk to them. He's a very good doctor, but he doesn't know a word of Russian!

**Mayor** : (to Judge) And you ought to do something about the state of your courthouse, Ámos Fyódorovitch! Your porter keeps geese in the anterooms, and goslings, and they run about and peck under your feet. Of course it's a good thing to keep poultry, very praiseworthy, but can't he keep them somewhere else? It makes the place smell so!

**Judge** : That's a small matter. I can have them killed today. Would you like to come to

dinner to-night?

**Mayor** : Then your offices are full of all kinds of rubbish. Skins hanging up to dry, and whips and gear mixed up with the papers. I know you're very fond of hunting, but why not tidy it up till this inspector's been, then you can put it all back, if you want to! Then that clerk of yours! He may know a great deal, but he gives off a powerful odour of vodka! I've wanted to talk these things over with you for some time, but something has always turned up to put it out of my mind. If it really is his natural smell, as he says it is, there must be a remedy. Tell him to try eating onions, or perhaps the doctor could give him something or other.

**Judge** : No, it's no good. He says when he was a child his nurse bruised him, and he's given off a slight smell of vodka ever since.

**Mayor** : Well, I thought I'd mention it. About your conduct in Court, and what Tchmihov in his letter calls 'little failings' well! What is there to say? No man is without sin. It's God's will, and it is no use the free-thinkers arguing about it.

**Judge** : Well, there are sins and sins. I freely admit I take bribes, but what sort of bribes? Borzoi puppies, that's all!

**Mayor** : Whether it's Borzoi puppies or something else, it's still bribery.

**Judge** : But you're wrong there. For example, if a man takes a fur coat, worth 500 roubles, or a shawl for his wife...

**Mayor** : (who doesn't relish this line) Well, what of it? Only taking puppies as bribes won't save you. Why, you don't believe in God! You never go to church! As for me, I do at least believe devoutly, and I go to church every Sunday. But you ... when you start talking about the creation of the world, it makes my hair stand on end!

**Judge** : Well, at least my opinions are my own. A man who thinks for himself.

**Mayor** : Sometimes much thinking is worse than none at all. As for the rest, I only mentioned about the district courthouse, but to tell the truth, hardly anyone is likely to look into it. It's in such a state, it must be under divine protection. (wheeling round) Now then, Luká Lúkich, as the school superintendent it's your business to superintend the teachers. I know they're very learned men, educated in all kinds of colleges, but their behaviour is most peculiar. Perhaps that's the natural way of educated men, I don't know. There's one who's always making grimaces. He might put this inspector in a very bad mood.

**SS.** : What can I do? I did speak to him about it once; it was the day the prince inspected us. That man pulled such a fearful face, I never saw anything like it! I got a telling-off for letting the boys be taught wild, godless ideas!

**Mayor** : Yes, yes. Now take the history teacher. He's an able chap, knows his subject, but he expounds it with so much heat, that there's no understanding him. I listened to him once; while he was talking about the Assyrians and Baby-lonians, he was all right, but when he came to Alexander the Great, it was simply indescribable! I thought the place was on fire! He jumped down from his desk, took a chair and banged it on the floor, brandished it over his head! I think he was describing a battle. Now Alexander the Great was a great general and all that, but why break the chairs, they're Government property?

**SS.** : Yes, he's a hothead. I've spoken to him about it, but he just says, "As you wish but I would lay down my life in the cause of learning!"

**Mayor** : Yes, it's a mysterious law of life. Clever men are never quite sane. They either drink, or go mad and make faces that would shock the saints!

**SS.** : Heaven help any man in the education line! These clever fellows put me in a

sweat whenever they open their mouths!  
Always showing off!

**Mayor:** It wouldn't matter but ... it's this cursed incognito! He may look in any minute and say. "Aha, My pets! Here you are! And who is Health Commissioner here? Zemlyanika. Hand over Zemlyanika! And who is the judge? Lyápkín-Tyápkín. Hand over Lyápkín-Tyápkín." It's awful!

(the door opens; all jump; the Postmaster comes in)

**Postm. :** Tell me; what's this about an Inspector, gentlemen?

**Mayor :** Have you only just heard?

**POSTM :** I heard something from Peter Ivanovitch Bobchinsky.

He's just been to see me at the post office.

**Mator :** What's your opinion?

**Postm. :** I think it means war with the Turks.

**Judge :** Just what I said! My very words!

**Postm. :** Yes! It's all the fault of those filthy French!

**Mayor :** (great scorn) War with the Turks! You fool! War with us more likely! We're the ones who are going to catch it, not the Turks! This letter says that much!

**Postm. :** Oh! That's different. Maybe it won't be war with  
the Turks.

**Mayor :** How do you feel about it, Ivan Koosmitch?

- Postm.** : Me? Oh. I don't know. How do you feel?
- Mayor** : Well, I'm not frightened, but I am a little uneasy, about the trades-people. They say they've found me difficult, though God's my judge, if I have taken from one or two, I did it without any ill-feeling, (links arms with PM. And takes him aside) I even think there may have been some secret denunciation of me. Why else should they send an Inspector here? Now listen, Ivan Koosmitch, this is for our mutual benefit. Couldn't you take every letter that passes through your post office, and, well, just unseal it a little bit, you know, and read it through. Then if there was no denunciation or anything, you could reseal it somehow, or send it on unsealed.
- Postm.** : I know, I know. . . . You're not teaching me anything. I've done it for years, not just as a precaution; I do like to know what goes on in the world. I tell you, it makes most interesting reading! And so edifying!
- Mayor** : Have you found anything about an official from Petersburg?
- Postm.** : No! But plenty about those in Kostroma and Saratov. It's a pity you did not read the letters. Wonderful tit-bits! The other day a lieutenant wrote to a friend, describing a ball in most sprightly language, very, very nicely. "My life, dear friend, soars to Empyrean heights of pleasure," he wrote, "young women, music, hard riding." He described it with deep feeling. I kept it on purpose. Would you like to read it?

- Mayor** : I can't be bothered now, but do me that favour, Ivan Kóosmitch. If you find any complaint or denunciation, don't stop to think, keep it back.
- Postm.** : I'll do that with pleasure.
- Judge** : I warn you, you'll get into trouble some day for that.
- Mayor** : Nonsense, nonsense. If you did anything publicly, mind, that would be different, but this is a family affair.
- Judge** : Yes, there'd soon be trouble. By the way, Anton Antonovitch, I was coming to show you my new bitch, own sister to the one you know about. Oh! Have you heard about Cheptovitch and Valinsky's lawsuit? That's a great luxury to me. I'm in clover. I can go coursing one day on Cheptovitch's land. and the next on Valinsky's!
- Mayor** : Holy Saints! I'm not interested in your coursing just now! It's this infernal incognito! Having to sit here and wait till that door suddenly opens and . . . [the door does suddenly open; all jump; inter Bobchinsky and Dobchinsky, panting.]
- Bob.** : Something extraordinary has happened
- Dob.** : Most unexpected tidings!
- All** : What's happened? What is it?
- Dob.** : The strangest affair! Quite unforeseen! We were going into the inn .
- Bob.** : (interrupting) Yes. I was going into the inn with Peter Ivanovitch here (indicates Dob.)

- Dob.** : (interrupting) But let me tell it, Peter Ivanovitch!
- Bob.** : No! Let me, let me ... You haven't got the style... Permit me, please!
- Dob.** : But you'll get confused; you won't remember everything!
- Bob.** : No! I shall remember! So help me! I shall remember it all! Don't keep interfering. I'll tell it! Tell him not to interfere!
- Mayor:** Oh, for God's sake tell us what it's all about. My heart's in my mouth. Sit down everybody, find yourself seats. Here's a chair for you. Peter Ivanovitch. (both Bob. and Dob.' attempt to sit in it; all eager and attentive). Now then. What is it?
- Bob.** : Allow me. I'll begin at the beginning and tell you everything. As soon as I had the pleasure of leaving you. After you received that letter, well then I was going along. Please don't interrupt. Peter Ivanovitch. I know all about it. Well, you must understand. I ran in to see Korobkin. and as he wasn't at home I turned in to see Rastakóvsky, and as he wasn't at home I went to see Ivan Koosmitch here (indicating postmaster) to communicate to him the news you had received, and leaving there I encountered Peter Ivanovitch (indicating Dob.).
- Dob** : Near the stall where they sell pies.



**Bob** : Yes, near the stall where they sell pies. I met Peter Ivanovitch and I said, "Have you heard the news Anton Antonovitch has received in a letter?" Peter Ivanovitch had heard all about it from your housekeeper, Avdotya, who was sent for some reason to Pochechuev's . . .

**Dob.** : To get a keg for the French brandy.

**Bob.** : (in spite of himself) To get a keg for French brandy. Please don't interrupt, don't interrupt. So we went to Pochechuev's and on the way he said to me, he said, "Let's go into the inn. My stomach . . . I've had nothing since morning, and it's rumbling so," that is, of course, Peter Ivanovitch's stomach. "Into the inn," he kept saying; "They have just got some fresh salmon in, and we could have just a snack." Well, we were in the inn, when a young man. .

**Dob.** : Of elegant appearance, but not in official uniform . . .

**Bob.** : Of elegant appearance, but not in official uniform . . ., came across the room, and his face had a kind of thoughtfulness, a physiognomy, and a great deal, oh yes. A great deal, up here (tapping forehead). I had a kind of presentiment, and I said to Peter Ivanovitch, "There is more here than meets the eye." Yes. So we beckoned the innkeeper, you know, Vlass ... his wife gave birth three weeks ago, and such an alert little fellow! He'll be like his father and run the inn . . . well, we called him, and said to him very quietly, "Who is that young man?" And Vlass answered—Oh please have the goodness not to interrupt, Peter Ivanovitch! You won't tell it right, and anyway you lisp, you've got a tooth in your head that whistles—Well, said Vlass, "That young man," he said, "is a civil servant, an official, travelling from Petersburg to his family in the province of Saratov. His name's Ivan Alexandrovitch Hlestakov, and he behaves very strangely. He's been here two weeks, shows no signs of going, takes everything on credit, and doesn't pay a copek." As he said this, it dawned on me, and I said to Peter Ivanovitch, I said. "Aha!"

**Dob.** : No! Peter Ivanovitch. I said it first!  
(the Mayor and the rest, who have been displaying increasing impatience, break out, ad lib.) The devil take the pair of you!  
What dawned on you?

**Bob.** : (unruffled) Well, perhaps you said "Aha" first,

but I said it too. We both said, "Aha," we said, "Why is he staying here, if his destination's Saratov? And an official at that!"

**Mayor** : Who? Which official?

**Bob.** : Why! The one you had the letter about! The Government Inspector! (consternation.)

**Mayor** : (trying to reassure himself) What? God be with us! That's not him! It can't be!

**Dob.** : It must be! He doesn't go away. He pays no money. Who else could it be? And he has an official order for post-horses to Saratov!

**Bob.** : I tell you it's him! So observant! He looked at every-thing, even saw that we were eating salmon ... on account of Peter Ivanovitch's stomach, you know . . . and he came and inspected our plates. It gave me quite a turn!

**Mayor** : Lord forgive us, miserable sinners! What's the number of his room?

**Dob.** : Number 4. Under the staircase.

**Bob.** : The room where the officers had the fight last year.

**Mayor** : And how long's he been here?

**Dob.** : Two weeks, he came on St. Basil's day.

**Mayor** : Two weeks! Mother of God! AU that time the convicts haven't been fed! The sergeant's wife's been flogged! The streets haven't been swept! The town's like a pothouse! Disgrace! Ignominy! (clutching temples.)

**CC.** : Well, Anton Antonovitch. hadn't we better wait on him in a body?

- Mayor** : No, no! I'll go alone. I've had some bad turns in the past, and it's come off. and sometimes I've even been thanked into the bargain. Perhaps God will preserve us, even now. You say he's a young man?
- Dob.** : Oh yes. Twenty-three or four at the most.
- Mayor** : Good. Young men are easier to handle. There'd be much worse trouble with an old hand. Now, gentlemen, take steps, get things ready, and I'll betake myself alone, or perhaps which Peter Ivanovitch. Yes, we'll go for a stroll round to the inn. to see how travellers are treated. Oh! Svistoónov! [enter Constable.] Go at once to the Police Superintendent, and ... no! I shall want you. Tell someone else to go and fetch the Superintendent, as quickly as possible, and then come back here. [Constable runs off.]
- CC.** : (to Judge) We'd better be going, and get things in order.
- Judge** : What have you got to fear? You just give out some clean nightcaps to the patients, and there's an end of it.
- CC.** : Nightcaps! We were ordered to give the patients good oatmeal gruel, and the place stinks of rotten cabbage so much that you have to hold your nose.
- Judge** : It's just for that reason I'm not worrying. My courthouse smells so, no one will look in at it. But if he had a look at any of the papers, then life would not be so good. I've been sitting on

the judge's bench here for fifteen years, and if I had to consult the court records . . . well, I wash my hands of it; Solomon himself couldn't tell from them what was truth and what were Lies! [the Judge, CC., Sch. Super., and postmaster go out. In the doorway they meet the Constable, returning]

**Mayor** : (to the Constable) Is there a cab at the door?

**Const.** : Yes, sir.

**Mayor** : Go into the street and . . . no. stop. Go and fetch, where's the other constable? I told Prohorov to be here. Where is he?

**Const.** : He's at his house, he can't go on duty.

**Mayor.** : Why not?

**Const.** : They brought him in this morning, dead drunk. He's been soused with two tubfuls of water, but up to now he hasn't got sober.

**Mayor** : (clutching temples) Oh! My God! My God! Go quickly into the street, no ... run into the other room and fetch me my sword and new hat. [exit Constable, left.] Now, Peter Ivanovitch we must be getting off.

**Bob.** : Let me come, too.

**Mayor** : No, it's impossible, there's not room in the cab.

**Bob.** : Never mind that. I'll run behind. I only want to look through a chink, [reenter Constable, with sword and sword-belt, and a hat-box.]

**Mayor** : (to Constable, drawing sword) Go and get the watchmen and ... good heavens! Look at the

scratches and stains on this sword! That wretched shopkeeper Abdulin knows his Mayor's sword's a disgrace! Any honest fellow would send him a new one! But these sly people! They're probably getting ready to complain about me already! Get the watchmen to bring streets and clean the brooms-devil take it! You know what I mean. Tell them to sweep the streets, especially near the inn. and sweep them clean, you hear! And you'd better look out! I know all about you! Slipping silver spoons down your boots! I've got ears! And your little game with Chernayev ... he gave you two yards of cloth for a uniform, and you took the whole roll! You take more than your rank entitles you to!

[enter Police Superintendent]

Ah! Stepán Ilyítch! And where had you vanished to? It's disgraceful!

- PS.** : I was here, on the gate.
- Mayor** : Well, listen, that official from Petersburg has arrived. What arrangements have you made?
- PS.** : As you ordered, I've sent Poogovítsin with the watchmen to sweep the pavements.
- Mayor** : And where's Dyerzhimorda?
- PS.** : Out with the fire pump.
- Mayor** : But Prohorov's drunk. Why do you allow it?
- PS.** : God knows! Yesterday there was a fight on the outskirts, he went to deal with it, and came back drunk.

**Mayor** : Now pay attention. Put that tall constable, Poogovítsin, on the bridge, to put up a good appearance. Then pull down that fence by the cobbler's as quick as you can, and put poles with markers as if it was all going to be levelled. The more pulling down you can arrange the better; it shows the town authorities are active. Oh my God! I forgot! Behind that fence there's a pile of stinking rubbish; forty carts wouldn't take it away! What a dirty rotten town this is! You put up some monument, or even a fence, and people come, devil knows where from, and shoot all kinds of filthy rubbish on it! (sighs) Now if this Inspector asks any of the police, "Are you contented?" "they are to say, " Perfectly contented, your Honour." And if anyone isn't perfectly contented, I'll give'em something to content them. Oh! Oh! I am a sinful man! I transgress in many ways! [picks up hat-box instead of hat; he has put on his sword during the previous speech] Oh God! Keep me out of their clutches this time, and I'll put up the biggest candle you've ever seen! I'll make every scoundrelly merchant contribute a hundred-weight of wax! Let's be going, Peter Ivanovitch. (puts on the box instead of the hat.)

**PS.** : (respectfully) That's the box, Anton Antonovitch, not the hat.

**Mayor** : Very well, it's the box, devil take it. (putting on his cocked hat) Now remember, if anyone

asks why the hospital chapel hasn't been built that we got the funds for, five years ago, the answer is that it was begun, but it got burnt down. I sent in a report about it. But I suppose some idiot will forget, and say it was never begun ' [he goes out, then comes back] And don't let the soldiers run about the streets half naked. The rascals only wear shirts and tunics without any trousers! [all go out; the Mayor's wife and daughter come running in from left.]

**Anna** : Where have they gone? Where have they gone? (opening door) Anton? Papa? (to Marya) It's all your doing! Dawdling and rummaging about for pins and necklaces! (goes to window, and leans out, calling) Anton! Papa! Where are you off to? What? Has he come? The Government Inspector of course! What's he like? Has he a moustache? Is he handsome?

**Mayor** : (below) Bye'n'bye, m'dear! Bye-bye!

**Anna** : Bye'n'bye! That's news, that is! What is he? A colonel? (sound of one horse cab driving off) He's gone. I'll remember this. (mimicking daughter) "Mummy! Mummy! Wait! Fasten my necklace at the back! " Now we've not found out anything. All through your maddening conceit! Because you heard the Postmaster was here, you had to start preening yourself in front of a mirror. You think he's courting you, and all the time he makes faces when your back's turned!.

**Marya** : Well, never mind. Mummy. We shall know all

about it in an hour or two.

**Anna** : An hour or two! Thank you kindly! Why not say a month or two? (leaning out of window) Hey! Avdotya! Avdotya! What? Have you found out who's come? No? What a fool (Anton waved you away? That makes no difference, you ought to have stopped him and found out everything! Stuff and nonsense! They drove off quickly? Well run after the cab! Go on! Run! Look through a chink and find out everything! What colour eyes he's got, and whether he's got a moustache! And come back here at once! Go on! D'you hear? Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! (She is leaning out of the window shouting at the top of her voice when).



THE CURTAIN FALLS.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

The scene is a room at the inn; it is a poky little room, with only one small window; there is a table with an empty bottle on it, a bed, a travelling trunk, a pair of top-boots in the corner; two or three chairs; at curtain-rise Yosif, Hlestakov's servant, is sprawling on his master's bed.

**Yosif** : Ouch! I'm so hungry my belly's rumbling like a regiment of drummers! And we're not going to get home at this rate! What's to be done? Two months since we left Petersburg! Well, we've chucked money away on the road, chucked it away like water, we have, and now we sit here with our tail between our legs. What's to do now? There'd have been enough and plenty for the fares, but, you know, everywhere we stop we have to show off. (scratches himself, imitating Hlestakov) "Hey, Yosif. Run along and book me rooms. The best, remember! And order me the very best dinner they have! I can't look at common food. I must have the very best!" And him a junior copying clerk! And, of course, he makes friends with the other travellers, and then, out come the cards, and they play till he gets cleaned out! Eh! It's a dog's life. Better to live in the country. It's dull, but there's not all this trouble. You get yourself a good fat country