

***The Death of Ivan Illych* by Leo Tolstoy (Published by Bantam Books)**

Approved for use in Advanced Placement Communication Arts IV

Summary

Tolstoy's rendition of a premature death opens with the "friends" and acquaintances of Ivan Illych complaining because they must go to the funeral services of Ivan and pay their appropriate, social respects. The introductory scene lays the fabric upon which the tapestry of Ivan's life is painted. In flashback, the reader discovers that Ivan's life has not been well lived. In fact, his preoccupation with status, prestige, and money has caused him to ignore those things in life that make life worth living even with all its hardships and frustrations. As he recounts his childhood, early adult, and adult life in flashback, he realizes that the status he has always sought amongst his neighbors, work associates, and family is of little to no value. After contracting a fatal illness and living through its diagnosis and its pain, Ivan's epiphany is simply that he lived life according to society's rules rather than his own and that those events and people for which he should have lived his life are not willing to share in his grief at losing it. His servant, Gerasim, is the only one with whom Ivan can identify because he is the only figure who wants nothing more than to help Ivan through the dying. The reader is left understanding that living life well is far more important than living life according to the expectations of a society.

Connection to the Curriculum

Close reading is a requirement of all texts used in the Advanced Placement program at all levels. This text is a short Russian novella that instructors use to teach such AP elements as narrative pace, syntax, imagery, tone, and literary structure. In addition, it may be used in conjunction with summer reading activities or as a companion to other Russian works/authors traditionally referenced on the national AP examination.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.3- The students expand vocabulary. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text. 2.2- The students understand the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Research: 4.1- The students use effective research practices. 4.2- The students use ethical research practices.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.4.3- The student uses prior knowledge, content and text features to make, revise and confirm predictions.

1.3.5- The student identifies, interprets, and analyzes the use of figurative language including similes, metaphors, analogies, hyperbole, imagery and symbolism.

1.4.9- The student uses post-its, highlighting, or other methods of making connections and predictions with the text.

1.4.13- The student compares and contrasts varying aspects of literature.

1.4.20- The student identifies the author's position in a persuasive, literary analysis paper that describes techniques the author uses to support that position.

Literature:

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and their influence on characters and events in the story of literary text.

2.1.3- The student analyzes and evaluates how the author uses various plot elements to advance the plot and make connections between events.

2.2.2- The student compares and contrasts works of literature that deal with similar topics and problems.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Tolstoy takes a frank look at an ailing man facing death.

AP Connections

Teachers often incorporate this text when comparing and contrasting to other Russian novelists such as Dostoevsky and his novel, *Crime and Punishment*. The text employs literary techniques such as flashback, internal *mental* monologue, and an unusual narrative pace that are not found in other pieces of literature. While short, the novella contains many devices that are essential to college-bound students of literary analysis.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon