

War and Peace: Text and Context

War and Peace combines a vivid depiction of life in nineteenth-century Russia with an exploration of social and philosophical questions. It traces the fates of dozens of characters as they move through palaces and battlefields and country estates; and it also reflects on theories of history, women's role in society, the definition of courage, and – a topic Tolstoy takes in stride – how to live a correct life. To top it off, there are descriptions of Napoleon's military campaigns against Russia.

Tolstoy believed that a conventional novel could not encompass all the elements he wished to include in his narrative. A close reading of the text will show us the idiosyncratic structure Tolstoy devised for *War and Peace*; and that will also allow us to focus attention on Tolstoy's prose style, which is also idiosyncratic.

Classroom meetings will be a mix of short lectures and open discussion. To facilitate discussion, it would help if we all had the same edition of *War and Peace* at hand. We will be using the translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Books, 2008). (N.B. Used copies are readily available on Amazon at reasonable prices.)

As indicated below, reading assignments will be approximately 150-200 pages/week, so getting started early is advisable, if possible. Particular passages in each week's reading that will be discussed in class will be announced in advance.

Week 1: *War and Peace* pp. 3-200 (Vol. I Parts 1 and 2)

Week 2: *War and Peace*, pp. 201-346 (Vol. I, Part 3 and Volume II, Part 1)

Week 3: *War and Peace*, pp.347-487 (Vol. II, Parts 2 and 3)

Week 4: *War and Peace*, pp. 488-599 (Vol. II, Parts 4 and 5)

Week 5: *War and Peace*, pp. 603-820 (Vol. III, Parts 1 and 2)

Week 6: *War and Peace*, pp. 821-986 (Vol. III, Part 3, Vol. IV, Part 1)

Week 7: *War and Peace*, pp. 987-1074 (Vol. IV, Parts 2 and 3)

Week 8: *War and Peace*, pp. 1075-1215 (Vol. IV, Part 4, Epilogue, Parts 1 and 2)

Thursdays from 10:00 a.m.–noon starting March 2 through April 20 for 8 sessions

In-Person — Lecture/Discussion — Max 20