

**Chapter 1 : Has any one else read Fyodor Dostoevsky's The Idiot? : books**

*In Dostoevsky's novel, The Idiot, Prince Myshkin is more an angelic spirit than he is a man; he is a complex metaphor for fantasy, a mode of consciousness that is divorced from the earth and one which envisions human nature as univocal, unified, innocent, and free from contradiction.*

From there he was assigned to a Moscow hospital, where he served as military doctor, and in , he was appointed a senior physician. In he married Maria Nechayeva. The following year, he took up a post at the Mariinsky Hospital for the poor. Varvara " , Andrei " , Lyubov born and died , Vera " , Nikolai " and Aleksandra " Mikhail Dostoevsky and Maria Dostoevskaya born Nechayeva. He was raised in the family home in the grounds of the Mariinsky Hospital for the Poor, which was in a lower class district on the edges of Moscow. From the age of three, he was reading heroic sagas, fairy tales and legends by his nanny, Alena Frolovna, an especially influential figure in his upbringing and love for fictional stories. When a nine-year-old girl had been raped by a drunk, he was asked to fetch his father to attend to her. The incident haunted him, and the theme of the desire of a mature man for a young girl appears in The Devils, The Brothers Karamazov, Crime and Punishment, and other writings. He was described as a pale, introverted dreamer and an over-excitabile romantic. Dostoevsky felt out of place among his aristocratic classmates at the Moscow school, and the experience was later reflected in some of his works, notably The Adolescent. The previous May, his parents had sent Dostoevsky and his brother Mikhail to St Petersburg to attend the free Nikolayev Military Engineering Institute , forcing the brothers to abandon their academic studies for military careers. Dostoevsky entered the academy in January , but only with the help of family members. Mikhail was refused admission on health grounds and was sent to the Academy in Reval , Estonia. As his friend Konstantin Trutovsky once said, "There was no student in the entire institution with less of a military bearing than F. He moved clumsily and jerkily; his uniform hung awkwardly on him; and his knapsack, shako and rifle all looked like some sort of fetter he had been forced to wear for a time and which lay heavily on him. Although he was solitary and inhabited his own literary world, he was respected by his classmates. His reclusiveness and interest in religion earned him the nickname "Monk Photius ". Had the serfs been found guilty and sent to Siberia , Khotiaintsev would have been in a position to buy the vacated land. He visited Mikhail in Reval, and frequently attended concerts, operas, plays and ballets. During this time, two of his friends introduced him to gambling. Rizenkampf, a friend of Mikhail. Rizenkampf characterised him as "no less good-natured and no less courteous than his brother, but when not in a good mood he often looked at everything through dark glasses, became vexed, forgot good manners, and sometimes was carried away to the point of abusiveness and loss of self-awareness". None were successful, and his financial difficulties led him to write a novel. His friend Dmitry Grigorovich , with whom he was sharing an apartment at the time, took the manuscript to the poet Nikolay Nekrasov , who in turn showed it to the renowned and influential literary critic Vissarion Belinsky. Shortly thereafter, he wrote his second novel, The Double , which appeared in the journal Notes of the Fatherland on 30 January , before being published in February. Around the same time, Dostoevsky discovered socialism through the writings of French thinkers Fourier , Cabet , Proudhon and Saint-Simon. Through his relationship with Belinsky he expanded his knowledge of the philosophy of socialism. He was attracted to its logic, its sense of justice and its preoccupation with the destitute and the disadvantaged. Dostoevsky eventually parted with him and his associates. From to he released several short stories in the magazine Annals of the Fatherland, including " Mr. These stories were unsuccessful, leaving Dostoevsky once more in financial trouble, so he joined the utopian socialist Betekov circle, a tightly knit community which helped him to survive. When the circle dissolved, Dostoevsky befriended Apollon Maykov and his brother Valerian. In , on the recommendation of the poet Aleksey Pleshcheyev , [41] he joined the Petrashevsky Circle , founded by Mikhail Petrashevsky , who had proposed social reforms in Russia. Mikhail Bakunin once wrote to Alexander Herzen that the group was "the most innocent and harmless company" and its members were "systematic opponents of all revolutionary goals and means". Dostoevsky never attempted to complete it. Dostoevsky was accused of reading works by Belinsky, including the banned Letter to Gogol, [46] and of circulating copies of

these and other works. Antonelli, the government agent who had reported the group, wrote in his statement that at least one of the papers criticised Russian politics and religion. Dostoevsky responded to these charges by declaring that he had read the essays only "as a literary monument, neither more nor less"; he spoke of "personality and human egoism" rather than of politics. Even so, he and his fellow "conspirators" were arrested on 23 April at the request of Count A. The members were held in the well-defended Peter and Paul Fortress, which housed the most dangerous convicts. They sentenced the members of the circle to death by firing squad, and the prisoners were taken to Semyonov Place in St Petersburg on 23 December where they were split into three-man groups. Dostoevsky was the third in the second row; next to him stood Pleshcheyev and Durov. The execution was stayed when a cart delivered a letter from the Tsar commuting the sentence. Dostoevsky served four years of exile with hard labour at a katorga prison camp in Omsk, Siberia, followed by a term of compulsory military service. After a fourteen-day sleigh ride, the prisoners reached Tobolsk, a prisoner way station. In Tobolsk, the members received food and clothes from the Decembrist women, as well as several copies of the New Testament with a ten-ruble banknote inside each copy. Eleven days later, Dostoevsky reached Omsk [48] [50] together with just one other member of the Petrashevsky Circle, the poet Sergei Durov. In summer, intolerable closeness; in winter, unendurable cold. All the floors were rotten. Filth on the floors an inch thick; one could slip and fall. We were packed like herrings in a barrel. There was no room to turn around. From dusk to dawn it was impossible not to behave like pigs. Fleas, lice, and black beetles by the bushel. He was only permitted to read his New Testament Bible. In addition to his seizures, he had haemorrhoids, lost weight and was "burned by some fever, trembling and feeling too hot or too cold every night". The smell of the privy pervaded the entire building, and the small bathroom had to suffice for more than people. Dostoevsky was occasionally sent to the military hospital, where he read newspapers and Dickens novels. He was respected by most of the other prisoners, and despised by some because of his xenophobic statements. They both rented houses in the Cossack Garden outside Semipalatinsk. Wrangel remarked that Dostoevsky "looked morose. His sickly, pale face was covered with freckles, and his blond hair was cut short. He was a little over average height and looked at me intensely with his sharp, grey-blue eyes. It was as if he were trying to look into my soul and discover what kind of man I was. Alexander Isaev took a new post in Kuznetsk, where he died in August. Maria and her son then moved with Dostoevsky to Barnaul. In Dostoevsky sent a letter through Wrangel to General Eduard Totleben, apologising for his activity in several utopian circles. As a result, he obtained the right to publish books and to marry, although he remained under police surveillance for the rest of his life. Maria married Dostoevsky in Semipalatinsk on 7 February, even though she had initially refused his marriage proposal, stating that they were not meant for each other and that his poor financial situation precluded marriage. Their family life was unhappy and she found it difficult to cope with his seizures. Describing their relationship, he wrote: They mostly lived apart. In London, he met Herzen and visited the Crystal Palace. He recorded his impressions of those trips in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, in which he criticised capitalism, social modernisation, materialism, Catholicism and Protestantism. He met his second love, Polina Suslova, in Paris and lost nearly all his money gambling in Wiesbaden and Baden-Baden. The failure of *Epoch*, the magazine he had founded with Mikhail after the suppression of *Vremya*, worsened his financial situation, although the continued help of his relatives and friends averted bankruptcy. Dostoevsky contacted stenographer Pavel Olkhin from Saint Petersburg, who recommended his pupil, the twenty-year-old Anna Grigoryevna Snitkina. The strangeness of his eyes gave Dostoevsky some mysterious appearance. His face was pale, and it looked unhealthy. The 7 rubles he had earned from *Crime and Punishment* did not cover their debts, forcing Anna to sell her valuables. On 14 April, they began a delayed honeymoon in Germany with the money gained from the sale. They continued their trip through Germany, visiting Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Heidelberg and Karlsruhe. They spent five weeks in Baden-Baden, where Dostoevsky had a quarrel with Turgenev and again lost much money at the roulette table. Memorial plaque to Dostoevsky in Baden-Baden. In September, Dostoevsky began work on *The Idiot*, and after a prolonged planning process that bore little resemblance to the published novel, he eventually managed to write the first pages in only 23 days; the serialisation began in *The Russian Messenger* in January. Their first child, Sonya, had been conceived in Baden-Baden, and was born in Geneva on 5 March. The baby

died of pneumonia three months later, and Anna recalled how Dostoevsky "wept and sobbed like a woman in despair". In April , Dostoevsky made a final visit to a gambling hall in Wiesbaden. Anna claimed that he stopped gambling after the birth of their second daughter, but this is a subject of debate. During the trip, he burnt several manuscripts, including those of *The Idiot*, because he was concerned about potential problems with customs. The family arrived in Saint Petersburg on 8 July, marking the end of a honeymoon originally planned for three months that had lasted over four years. Their son Fyodor was born on 16 July, and they moved to an apartment near the Institute of Technology soon after. They hoped to cancel their large debts by selling their rental house in Peski, but difficulties with the tenant resulted in a relatively low selling price, and disputes with their creditors continued. Around early the family spent several months in Staraya Russa , a town known for its mineral spa. *Demons* was finished on 26 November and released in January by the "Dostoyevsky Publishing Company", which was founded by Dostoevsky and his wife. Although they only accepted cash payments and the bookshop was in their own apartment, the business was successful, and they sold around 3, copies of *Demons*. Anna managed the finances. In the summer of , Anna returned to Staraya Russa with the children, while Dostoevsky stayed in St Petersburg to continue with his *Diary*. In his fifteen months with *The Citizen*, he had been taken to court twice:

Chapter 2 : The Idiot, Fyodor Dostoevsky - Essay - calendrierdelascience.com

*The Idiot* (pre-reform Russian: *Идиотъ*; post-reform Russian: *Идиот*, tr. *Idiot*) is a novel by the 19th-century Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky. It was first published serially in the journal *The Russian Messenger* in

First, he is frank and open; unlike other members of high society such as Ganya and General Yepanchin, Myshkin does not hide his true feelings behind a veneer of friendliness in order to gain something or to merely maintain appearances. The prince always says what is on his mind, regardless of whether it is perfectly appropriate for the social setting. Prince Myshkin is also very meek. Unlike the other characters, many of whom constantly try to assert themselves, Myshkin is very altruistic. Not only is he humble, but he is also very giving and compassionate. These seemingly perfect traits of man come into headlong collision with a corrupt world. The world that Prince Myshkin enters is one of moral corruption and decay, with money as the object of principal importance. In this world, money not only makes one a better human being Ganya, for example, believes it can cure his mediocrity, but it can also obtain one a beautiful bride the various men bid for Nastassya Filippovna. No one deems Prince Myshkin a good husband for Aglaya, while nearly everyone considers Ptitsyn an emblem of mediocrity who has enriched himself through usury a most respectable match. Beautiful, intelligent women such as Nastassya Filippovna, are dishonored and consequently destroyed. The world of the novel is also full of drunks Lebedev, General Ivolgin, Ferdyschenko, Rogozhin and his company and rogues Lebedev, Doktorenko, Keller, Ferdyschenko and others. Practically everyone else, such as the Ptitsyns and the Ivolgins, is ordinary. High society is full of superficial nothings along with others such as General Yepanchin who have behaved in an obsequious manner to these nothings in order to gain a high position. Though Myshkin is infinitely morally superior to the world he enters, his effect on this world is ultimately zero a mix of positive and negative. Though Myshkin attempts to help those around him, he drives several of them General Ivolgin, Nastassya Filippovna, Aglaya to destruction. Russian Christianity and Redemption Prince Myshkin is a Christ figure, though Dostoevsky adds what he believes to be a Russian element to this messiah. Myshkin describes religion as an immensely strong feeling similar to the joy God feels for his creation a feeling he recognizes when he sees a young mother joyously nursing her baby. Much like the idea that religion is a feeling rather than a set of rules that one follows, Myshkin Christ-like character can also be reduced to a feeling: Dostoevsky explores the idea of redemption in a series of characters who are condemned. Myshkin, during his first meeting with the Yepanchins, tries to imagine the feelings of a condemned man prior to his execution. Later on, the novel unravels characters who much like the man standing near the scaffold and awaiting his execution stand on the brink of ruin. Myshkin offers some sort of hope if not the complete reversal of the death sentence, then at least the softening of the psychological suffering it inflicts upon the condemned. The *Idiot* is also full of sinners, from harmless drunkards like General Ivolgin to habitual liars and rogues like Ferdyschenko, Lebedev, Keller, Doktorenko and even murderers like Rogozhin. Prince Myshkin spends a considerable amount of time with all of these sinners, even after many of them have committed offenses against him. They need the prince morally and spiritually; his attempts at assisting them even after their affronts represent the ultimate in selfless compassion.

**Chapter 3 : The Reviews of The Idiot by Dostoevsky, the Theatre Collection**

*Note: Citations are based on reference standards. However, formatting rules can vary widely between applications and fields of interest or study. The specific requirements or preferences of your reviewing publisher, classroom teacher, institution or organization should be applied.*

Endowed with Christ-like spiritual attributes and professing a childlike, innocent belief in the possibility of achieving heaven on earth, Myshkin obviously enters a Russian society corroded by avariciousness, moral corruption, and spiritual desolation. The ensuing action presents a starkly apocalyptic and pessimistic vision of how inconsequential goodness and humility are in the midst of a society on the verge of moral and spiritual disintegration. Biographical Information Dostoevsky wrote *The Idiot* between and , at a time when he endured dire financial and emotional difficulties. In an effort to avoid his numerous creditors, Dostoevsky and his wife fled Russia and traveled from city to city in Europe, trying to eke out a humble living. During this gloomy period of poverty, the author suffered a number of serious bouts of epilepsy, which left him in a fragile emotional and physical condition. Some critics and biographers have speculated that Dostoevsky endowed Myshkin with epilepsy in an almost cathartic attempt to come to terms with the circumstances of his own condition. Dostoevsky also continued to succumb to his obsession with gambling, which left him desperate and penniless. To that end, he began work on a novel which he had promised the journal *Russian Messenger*. When *The Idiot* appeared in serial form beginning in , readers responded with bewilderment to what they considered to be incomplete characters, an incoherent narrative structure, and a fantastical, unrealistic setting. Given the initial reticence of the periodical subscribers, publishers were reluctant to purchase the book rights to the novel. Indeed, readers and commentators alike considered *The Idiot* a step backward for Dostoevsky after the resounding popular success of his previous novel, *Crime and Punishment*. Myshkin had been receiving treatment for epilepsy in a Swiss sanatorium, and now was on his way to visit his distant relatives, the Epanchins, in Russia. At first, Myshkin is welcomed into the upper-class society as something of a curiosity, a penniless and childlike character upon whom the cynical group focuses with amusement. Almost immediately upon arriving, Myshkin makes clear his dream to influence all of his acquaintances on the merits of living a life of honesty and humility. Despite his good intentions, Myshkin succeeds in embarrassing and offending nearly everyone with whom he comes in contact, but his presence, however awkward, becomes tolerated when he receives a sizable inheritance from a distant relative. Through his platonic admiration of Nastasya Filippovna, Myshkin unwittingly makes himself a rival for her hand in marriage, sending her other suitor, Rogozhin, into a jealous rage. Ippolit has died, Filippovna has been murdered, Rogozhin has been incarcerated, Aglaya runs away from Russia, and Myshkin regresses into a state of childlike idiocy. Dostoevsky represents him as a young man whose emotional and intellectual development has been arrested by the circumstances surrounding his illness. Although physically he is a man, he has the innocent personality of a child. In this regard, Myshkin represents a Christ-like figure, a character of innate goodness, who believes that humility and brotherly love can transform the earth into a kind of heaven where all humankind can live in harmony. Here, Dostoevsky carefully contrives an elaborate allegorical structure to accentuate the conflict between Myshkin and his acquaintances. The author employs a vast array of images, proper names, geographic places, physical descriptions, and biblical references to evoke moral decay, social chaos, and a pessimistic vision of the current spiritual state of Russia. Further, this spiritual decline signals an apocalyptic omen for Dostoevsky, and he integrates this idea into the fabric of his story as well. Critical Reception From the time of the publication of *The Idiot*, readers and commentators alike have been highly dissatisfied with what they perceive as loosely drawn characters, an incoherent narrative, and an artificial structural unity in the work. It has been suggested that these issues perhaps reflect the difficult circumstances under which Dostoevsky wrote his novel. Indeed, in recent decades many critics have attempted to salvage the literary merits of *The Idiot*, arguing that while the novel might be structurally deficient, it is also rich in esoteric spiritual and philosophical insights. In fact, one critic, Robert Hollander has perceptively argued that Dostoevsky ingeniously integrated the apocalyptic vision of the Book of Revelations into the structural

framework of *The Idiot* to unify the characters and narrative action of the novel. Indeed, critics such as Janet G. Tucker have argued that the time has come to move beyond the simplistic view that Myshkin is merely a one-dimensional, Christ-like character.

Chapter 4 : Review: The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoevsky | Books | The Guardian

*The Idiot [Fyodor Dostoyevsky] on calendrieldelascience.com \*FREE\* shipping on qualifying offers. An introduction by Agnes Cardinal, Prince Myshkin returns to Russia from an asylum in Switzerland.*

The novels meet the old tales with part parody, part dialogue, part rejection and reconstruction. Middlemarch opens with a paradigm of its heroine as a "later-born" St Theresa, "helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul". Unlike Eliot, Dostoevsky was Christian, and increasingly passionate about preserving faith. DH Lawrence, another maker of fictive prophecies and apocalypses, was reading The Idiot in Author and character face the problem all good characters face in all novels - good in fiction is just not as interesting as wickedness, and runs the risk of repelling readers, even those less worked up than Lawrence. There is another problem - goodness tends to mean unselfishness, and unselfishness tends to lack sexual energy, another great driving force in fictions. In the letter quoted above, written in as Dostoevsky was writing and sending out the first chapters of the novel, he acknowledges uneasily that he has seized this ambitious project prematurely, out of financial and professional desperation. The writing and publication of the novel were certainly both tortured and strained. It was written abroad, unlike his previous novels, for serial publication, put together by his second wife and stenographer, Anna Grigoryevna. Their daughter died during the writing. Dostoevsky gambled suicidally and had epileptic fits. Anna preserved the notebooks, which show that both plot and characters were in a state of fluid and volcanic chaos, even while the book was appearing. The good prince appears in the early notes as proud and demonic, and the rapist of his adopted sister a prototype of Nastasya Filippovna. He also commits arson and wife-murder. The first part of the novel, as it appeared, is acknowledged to be powerful. Dostoevsky appears not to have had a clear idea of how to proceed. The second two parts are phantasmagoric and rambling, unplotted and fitfully energetic. The world does not know what to do with him. I think The Idiot to be a masterpiece - flawed, occasionally tedious or overwrought, like many masterpieces - but a fact of world literature just as important as the densely dramatic Brothers Karamazov or the brilliantly subtle and terrifying Devils. In those two novels, as in the simpler Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky had plots and political and religious ideas working together. What makes the greatness is double -the character of the prince, and a powerful series of confrontations with death. The true subject of The Idiot is the imminence and immanence of death. It represents, we are told, a dead man who is totally flesh without life, damaged and destroyed, with no hint of a possible future resurrection. I had known, without fully understanding before I read this excellent new translation, that the idea of death in this novel is peculiarly pinned to the idea of execution - what I had not thought through was that in a materialist world the dead man in the painting is an executed man, whose consciousness has been brutally cut off. There is a rhythmic meditation on murder and execution in this story, at its most powerful and unbearable when Myshkin makes us confront the horror of the certainty of being about to die, of knowing that it is exactly appointed and inevitable, while the body and mind are in ordinary good health. The appalling nature of the close examination of these unimaginable emotions derives from the authority with which Dostoevsky can describe them, since he was himself condemned to death and reprieved, by an imperial whim, or display of power, as he stood in line at the scaffold behind a friend who had indeed just been killed. The novel describes the execution by guillotine of a French murderer. Rogozhin is not executed but transported to Siberia for his murder of Nastasya Filippovna. The prince recedes into blank idiocy after watching with the killer over the corpse. Connected to the terrible lucidity of the condemned man in the tumbril is the unearthly lucidity of the pre-epileptic aura, bliss without time or space, eternity in an instant. The images are their own meaning. Much - not all - of this is to do with the problem I mentioned earlier, of the awkward relation between sexual energy and goodness. The women think they are in a story about seduction, rape, proposals, money and marriage, like most novels in the realm of the passions and economic forces. The prince is in some absolute moral world in which he can instinctively gauge who is being cruel to whom, who is in need and who is tormenting or tormented, without having in him any genuine sexual response of his own to help him to judge his own effect on people. It is the old problem of "How could Jesus

be a perfect man if he had no sexual desire or experience? He does resemble his comic models, Don Quixote and Mr Pickwick, in that his innocence causes damage. Quixote inhabits the first real novel, in which the old forms of romance and religion become phantasms in his head and on our page, present but shadowy. Myshkin is a later, more riddling and more tragic figure of lost absolutes. In a world where God is simply dead flesh, a good man becomes simply an idiot.

**Chapter 5 : The Idiot Quotes by Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

*The Idiot Fyodor Dostoevsky. The following entry presents criticism of Dostoevsky's novel The Idiot (). See also Dostoevsky Short Story Criticism and Notes from the Underground Criticism.. In.*

A woodcut by Fritz Eichenberg for *The Idiot*, ca. A Few Facts He wore five-pound shackles on his ankles every day for four years. This was in the prison camp in Omsk where he was serving out a sentence of hard labor after being convicted of sedition for being part of a revolutionary cell dedicated to the liberation of the serfs and freedom of the press. One morning he was suddenly taken to Semyonov Square, where he was given a white death-shirt to put on and allowed to kiss the cross. Apparently this had been planned all along. On the way to the prison camp, they stopped for the night in Tobolsk where a town bell had been sent into exile, convicted of ringing for seditious purposes. Its sentence was eternal silence. In Tobolsk, he met a man who was chained to the wall. He had been chained there for eight years. The chain was seven feet long and extended from his sleeping pallet to the opposite wall. The man spent every day walking from the pallet to the wall and back. He showed where the chain attached to his underclothes, and the most comfortable way to lie down on the sleeping pallet. When he spoke, his voice was mild with a slight lisp. He said he had once been a government official. It was in Omsk that the epileptic seizures began. They came mostly once or twice a month. Sometimes, though rarely, twice a day. They could lie dormant for as long as four months. After each seizure something in him grieved. Words blackened or grew muffled for days, sometimes a week, their distant contours alien and heavy. But it is truth: After ten years he was released. He would place this corpse in his new novel, *The Idiot*. Sofia, his beloved first child, was born in Geneva during the writing of *The Idiot*, and died abruptly three months later of an inflammation of the lungs. With book after book, the critics labeled his work too fantastical, cruel, exaggerated, morbid. They occur every moment and they are not exceptional. In all those years in the prison camp, he spent no more than a few seconds alone. Barely held a pen or pencil except for the brief times he was hospitalized and Dr. Troitsky slipped him a sheet of paper and a pencil. So many mornings and nights in a barracks where hundreds of beetles crawled across the floor, as gradually he came to feel close to others who at first seemed opaque, alien threatening. Amid ugliness, strife, distortion, mutilation, a hand reaches as through flame to stroke the anguished face of another. A man asks himself in the cold of winter, If the rich have so much money, why must there be a freezing baby? So little stays unruined. In *The Idiot*, through one night and into morning, Prince Myshkin holds and strokes the murderer Rogozhin. Long hours of dark, then the window faintly lightens. It seems he will never speak again. But everything they think is just conjecture. No one can see inside his mind. The only fact that can truly be known is that he stayed with the murderer, stroked him, trembled, wept. Held close in mysterious, unspeakable empathy the suffering, delirious body and mind of another. Such a calm statement. But in his notebooks he keeps track of his seizures as time, space, language, stability, intention break in him over and over. The world breaks over and over. And there is the aura before: Suddenly amid the sadness, spiritual darkness and depression, his brain seemed to catch fire – His mind and heart were flooded with a dazzling light. All his agitation, doubts, worries, seemed composed in a twinkling, culminating in a great calm and understanding – And: As if you suddenly sense the whole of nature and suddenly say: If it were to last longer than five seconds – the soul could not endure it and would vanish. Between and , he suffered at least one hundred and two seizures, most likely more. Built into the workings of his nervous system, that strange radiance inseparable from devastation, that joy and calm that vanish into shame and damage. A hand returned to its own ignorance and mystery reaches to give comfort to another. V Cruelty In , the influential critic N. Mikhailovsky published his derogatory book-length essay *Dostoevsky: And if we understand too quickly, we may not understand well*. In , Edward Titchener, an American psychologist, translated *Einfuhlung* into empathy. Mirror neurons are neurons that fire both when an animal acts and when it observes the same action performed by another. They were first identified in the s by a team of neurophysiologists in Parma who placed electrodes in the ventral premotor cortexes of macaque monkeys. His books offer the words to feel into pursued to their radical end, embodied. She lives in New York City.

**Chapter 6 : SparkNotes: The Idiot: Themes**

*The Idiot: Dostoevsky's Fantastic Prince* • A Phenomenological Approach. New York, Frankfurt/Main, Berne: Peter Lang, vii, pp. sFr. 48 (paper)., *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* on DeepDyve, the largest online rental service for scholarly research with thousands of academic publications available at your fingertips.

Background[ edit ] In September , when Dostoevsky began work on what was to become *The Idiot*, he was living in Switzerland with his new wife Anna Grigoryevna , having left Russia in order to escape his creditors. They were living in extreme poverty, and constantly had to borrow money or pawn their possessions. They were evicted from their lodgings five times for non-payment of rent, and by the time the novel was finished in January they had moved between four different cities in Switzerland and Italy. During this time Dostoevsky periodically fell into the grip of his gambling addiction and lost what little money they had on the roulette tables. He was subject to regular and severe epileptic seizures, including one at the time Anna was going into labor with their daughter Sofia, delaying their ability to go for a midwife. The baby died aged only three months, and Dostoevsky blamed himself for the loss. Detailed plot outlines and character sketches were made, but were quickly abandoned and replaced with new ones. In one early draft, the character who was to become Prince Myshkin is an evil man who commits a series of terrible crimes, including the rape of his adopted sister Nastasya Filippovna , and who only arrives at goodness by way of his conversion through Christ. By the end of the year, however, a new premise had been firmly adopted. In a letter to Apollon Maykov Dostoevsky explained that his own desperate circumstances had "forced" him to seize on an idea that he had considered for some time but had been afraid of, feeling himself to be artistically unready for it. This was the idea to "depict a completely beautiful human being". It was not only a matter of how the good man responded to that world, but of how it responded to him. Part 1[ edit ] Prince Myshkin, a young man in his mid-twenties and a descendant of one of the oldest Russian lines of nobility, is on a train to Saint Petersburg on a cold November morning. He is returning to Russia having spent the past four years in a Swiss clinic for treatment of a severe epileptic condition. On the journey, Myshkin meets a young man of the merchant class, Parfyon Semyonovich Rogozhin, and is struck by his passionate intensity, particularly in relation to a woman—the dazzling society beauty Nastasya Filippovna Barashkova—with whom he is obsessed. Rogozhin has just inherited a very large fortune from his dead father, and he intends to use it to pursue the object of his desire. Joining in their conversation is a civil servant named Lebedyev — a man with a profound knowledge of social trivia and gossip. Realizing who Rogozhin is, he firmly attaches himself to him. Lizaveta Prokofyevna is the wife of General Epanchin, a wealthy and respected man in his mid-fifties. The General and his business partner, the aristocrat Totsky, are seeking to arrange a marriage between Ganya and Nastasya Filippovna. As a grown woman, Nastasya Filippovna has developed an incisive and merciless insight into their relationship. Ganya and the General openly discuss the subject in front of Myshkin. Ganya shows him a photograph of her, and he is particularly struck by the dark beauty of her face. Myshkin makes the acquaintance of Lizaveta Prokofyevna and her three daughters—Alexandra, Adelaida and Aglaya. They are all very curious about him and not shy about expressing their opinion, particularly Aglaya. He readily engages with them and speaks with remarkable candor on a wide variety of subjects — his illness, his impressions of Switzerland, art, philosophy, love, death, the brevity of life, capital punishment, and donkeys. In response to their request that he speak of the time he was in love, he tells a long anecdote from his time in Switzerland about a downtrodden woman—Marie—whom he befriended, along with a group of children, when she was unjustly ostracized and morally condemned. The Prince ends by describing what he divines about each of their characters from studying their faces and surprises them by saying that Aglaya is almost as beautiful as Nastasya Filippovna. Just as a quarrel on the subject is reaching a peak of tension, Nastasya Filippovna herself arrives to pay a visit to her potential new family. Shocked and embarrassed, Ganya succeeds in introducing her, but when she bursts into a prolonged fit of laughter at the look on his face, his expression transforms into one of murderous hatred. Nastasya Filippovna flirtatiously encourages the General and then mocks him. Rogozhin openly starts bidding for Nastasya Filippovna, ending with an offer of a hundred thousand rubles. With the scene assuming

increasingly scandalous proportions, Varya angrily demands that someone remove the "shameless woman". He is about to strike her when the Prince again intervenes, and Ganya slaps him violently in the face. Everyone is deeply shocked, including Nastasya Filippovna, and she struggles to maintain her mocking aloofness as the others seek to comfort the Prince. Myshkin admonishes her and tells her it is not who she really is. Rogozhin and his retinue go off to raise the , rubles. To enliven the party, Ferdyschenko suggests a game where everyone must recount the story of the worst thing they have ever done. Others are shocked at the proposal, but Nastasya Filippovna is enthusiastic. Disgusted, Nastasya Filippovna turns to Myshkin and demands his advice on whether or not to marry Ganya. Myshkin advises her not to, and Nastasya Filippovna, to the dismay of Totsky, General Epanchin and Ganya, firmly announces that she is following this advice. At this point, Rogozhin and his followers arrive with the promised , rubles. Nastasya Filipovna is preparing to leave with him, exploiting the scandalous scene to humiliate Totsky, when Myshkin himself offers to marry her. He speaks gently and sincerely, and in response to incredulous queries about what they will live on, produces a document indicating that he will soon be receiving a large inheritance. Though surprised and deeply touched, Nastasya Filipovna, after throwing the , rubles in the fire and telling Ganya they are his if he wants to get them out, chooses to leave with Rogozhin. Part 2[ edit ] For the next six months, Nastasya Filippovna remains unsettled and is torn between Myshkin and Rogozhin. Myshkin is tormented by her suffering, and Rogozhin is tormented by her love for Myshkin and her disdain for his own claims on her. Rogozhin confesses to beating her in a jealous rage and raises the possibility of cutting her throat. Despite the tension between them, they part as friends, with Rogozhin even making a gesture of concession. But the Prince remains troubled and for the next few hours he wanders the streets, immersed in intense contemplation. He suspects that Rogozhin is watching him and returns to his hotel where Rogozhinâ€™who has been hiding in the stairwayâ€™attacks him with a knife. At the same moment, the Prince is struck down by a violent epileptic seizure, and Rogozhin flees in a panic. Recovering, Myshkin joins Lebedyev from whom he is renting a dacha in the Summer resort town Pavlovsk. He knows that Nastasya Filippovna is in Pavlovsk and that Lebedyev is aware of her movements and plans. The Epanchins, who are also in Pavlovsk, visit the Prince. They are joined by their friend Yevgeny Pavlovich Radomsky, a handsome and wealthy military officer with a particular interest in Aglaya. The inarticulate Burdovsky is supported by a group of insolent young men. These include the consumptive seventeen-year-old Ippolit Terentyev, the nihilist Doktorenko, and Keller, an ex-officer who, with the help of Lebedyev, has written an article vilifying the Prince and Pavlishchev. The Prince tries to reconcile with the young men and offers financial support anyway. Disgusted, Lizaveta Prokofyevna loses all control and furiously attacks both parties. Ippolit laughs, and Lizaveta Prokofyevna seizes him by the arm, causing him to break into a prolonged fit of coughing. But he suddenly becomes calm, informs them all that he is near death, and politely requests that he be permitted to talk to them for a while. He awkwardly attempts to express his need for their love, eventually bringing both himself and Lizaveta Prokofyevna to the point of tears. But as the Prince and Lizaveta Prokofyevna discuss what to do with the invalid, another transformation occurs and Ippolit, after unleashing a torrent of abuse at the Prince, leaves with the other young men. Only Yevgeny Pavlovich remains in good spirits, and he smiles charmingly as he says good-bye. At that moment, a magnificent carriage pulls up at the dacha, and the ringing voice of Nastasya Filippovna calls out to Yevgeny Pavlovich. In a familiar tone, she tells him not to worry about all the IOUs as Rogozhin has bought them up. The carriage departs, leaving everyone, particularly Yevgeny Pavlovich and the Prince, in a state of shock. Part 3[ edit ] Reconciling with Lizaveta Prokofyevna, the Prince visits the Epanchins at their dacha. Myshkin joins Lizaveta Prokofyevna, her daughters and Yevgeny Pavlovich for a walk to the park to hear the music. While listening to the high-spirited conversation and watching Aglaya in a kind of daze, he notices Rogozhin and Nastasya Filippovna in the crowd. Nastasya Filippovna again addresses herself to Yevgeny Pavlovich, and in the same jolly tone as before loudly informs him that his uncleâ€™a wealthy and respected old man from whom he is expecting a large inheritanceâ€™has shot himself and that a huge sum of government money is missing. Yevgeny Pavlovich stares at her in shock as Lizaveta Prokofyevna makes a hurried exit with her daughters. Nastasya Filippovna hears an officer friend of Yevgeny Pavlovich suggest that a whip is needed for women like her, and she responds by grabbing a riding-whip from a bystander and striking the officer across

the face with it. He tries to attack her but Myshkin restrains him, for which he is violently pushed. Rogozhin, after making a mocking comment to the officer, leads Nastasya Filippovna away. The officer recovers his composure, addresses himself to Myshkin, politely confirms his name, and leaves. Myshkin follows the Epanchins back to their dacha, where eventually Aglaya finds him alone on the verandah. To his surprise, she begins to talk to him very earnestly about duels and how to load a pistol. They are interrupted by General Epanchin who wants Myshkin to walk with him. His reflections are interrupted by Keller who has come to offer to be his second at the duel that will inevitably follow from the incident that morning, but Myshkin merely laughs heartily and invites Keller to visit him to drink champagne. Keller departs and Rogozhin appears. He informs the Prince that Nastasya Filippovna wants to see him and that she has been in correspondence with Aglaya. She is convinced that the Prince is in love with Aglaya, and is seeking to bring them together. Myshkin is perturbed by the information, but he remains in an inexplicably happy frame of mind and speaks with forgiveness and brotherly affection to Rogozhin. Remembering it will be his birthday tomorrow, he persuades Rogozhin to join him for some wine. They find that a large party has assembled at his home and that the champagne is already flowing. The guests greet the Prince warmly and compete for his attention. The reading drags on for over an hour and by its end the sun has risen. Most of his audience, however, are bored and resentful, apparently not at all concerned that he is about to shoot himself. Only Vera, Kolya, Burdovsky and Keller seek to restrain him. He distracts them by pretending to abandon the plan, then suddenly pulls out a small pistol, puts it to his temple and pulls the trigger. There is a click but no shot: Ippolit faints but is not killed. It turns out that he had taken out the cap earlier and forgotten to put it back in. Ippolit is devastated and tries desperately to convince everyone that it was an accident. Eventually he falls asleep and the party disperses. The Prince wanders for some time in the park before falling asleep at the green seat appointed by Aglaya as their meeting place. Her laughter wakes him from an unhappy dream about Nastasya Filippovna.

**Chapter 7 : The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

*Dostoevsky's immediate ancestors on his mother's side were merchants; the male line on his father's side were priests. [6] [7] His father, Mikhail, was expected to join the clergy but instead ran away from home and broke with the family permanently.*

Just do make it clear from the beginning: I liked the novel just as much as Crime and Punishment and Notes from Underground , and I found it just as compulsively readable. The cast of characters is magnificent. My sole problem is the character of If Raskolnikov was the charismatic murderer whose side I took despite myself when he killed an old woman out of greed and broke down psychologically afterwards, Prince Myshkin is the supposedly good, childlike Christ figure whom I failed to like at all. My sole problem is the character of Myshkin. We are not a likely pair to hit it off, of course. He is a religious fanatic, whose conviction is so narrow-minded that he hates other variations of Christian dogma even more than atheists: Atheism only preaches a negation, but Catholicism goes further: It preaches the Antichrist, I declare it does, I assure you it does! He is a Russian nationalist, believing in expanding Russian dogma to the West: But I will give him a pass on that one, knowing the historical framework in which it was uttered. He is proud of his lack of education, and does absolutely nothing to enhance his own understanding, despite having leisure to spend all day studying. I believe in lifelong learning to develop as a human being. But I will give him a pass on that one, knowing he suffers from epilepsy and maybe from other conditions as well, which might make learning impossible for him. He is an elitist, openly rejecting equality and democracy in favour of his own, idle class: I speak to save us all, that our class may not be vanishing in vain; in darkness, without realising anything, abusing everything, and losing everything. Why disappear and make way for others when we might remain in advance and be the leaders? He is utterly afraid of female sexuality and almost pathological in his attempt to ignore the fact that it exists, admiring childlike behaviour and the inexperienced beauty of virgins. That is too much. His social ineptitude, his lack of imagination, his literal-mindedness, his prejudices - all of that might be fitting the time and place where he lives, but it is not objectively good. Even Raskolnikov, poor, and under supreme stress, was able to spontaneously give his last money to a desperate family to finance a funeral. Myshkin does nothing helpful with his fortune, which conveniently fell into his over-privileged lap. He uses the money to cruise in the Russian upper class society and to mingle with distinguished families. Instead, he gives credit to whoever happens to be in the room with him at the moment, without engaging or giving any active help, and he changes his mind when another person steps into the room. Since when is cluelessness a virtue? And what if he is not an idiot? If you for one second step out of that thought pattern, you can also call his change of mind hypocrisy, or opportunism, or fear of conflict, or flattery. Some might call it Christian meekness. I call it condescension. Myshkin is incredibly one-dimensional in his value system, fearing sexuality and human interaction. If I could see in Myshkin a person who is on the autistic spectrum, I would feel compassion for him and be frustrated that his community is not capable of helping him communicate according to his abilities. Under no circumstances am I to forget that Dostoyevsky truly saw in Myshkin a Christlike figure, and that he himself was committed to orthodox Christian dogma to the point of writing in a letter in Dostoyevsky, the brilliant realist writer, writes a story containing the truth of social life as he has accurately observed it, and his Christ is moping around on the fringes, causing trouble rather than offering ethical guidelines. He is absolutely passive, incapable of one single motivated, proactive good deed. Only criminals and ignorant peasants invoke the name of Christ in the novel. The educated people with whom Myshkin mingles are concerned with their own nervous modernity. They act like neglected children, drawing negative attention to themselves to make the God -father figure notice them. But he remains silent, ignoring even his most cherished child, the one he sacrificed for all the others, - Christ. The characters argue and discuss their respective positions on philosophy and religion throughout the long digressive plot, and Myshkin mourns earlier times when people were of a simpler mind: Even the idiotic Myshkin understands that something is wrong with the general, but he lets him rave on, encouraging him in his folly. But Myshkin is not a fool in that respect, just a passively condescending man. His reaction is outrageous: He was nearly beginning

to reproach himself for his laughter, but at once realised that he had nothing to reproach himself with, since he had an infinite pity for the general. How convenient for you, Prince! And you suffer so much when others laugh at your inadequacies. I have an infinite pity for you, Sir! Which leads me to my last comment on the character of Myshkin, who repeatedly was compared to Don Quixote in the novel. Don Quixote has more imagination and erudition than his contemporaries. Myshkin has none at all. Don Quixote actively wants to change the world for the better. Myshkin wants to passively enjoy his privileged status. Don Quixote is generous and open-minded. Myshkin is aloof and uninterested. Don Quixote has a mission. Myshkin floats in upper class meaninglessness. Don Quixote loves his ugly Dulcinea. So, who were my favourite characters then? As often happens to me while reading Dickens as well, I found much more satisfaction following the minor characters. Kolya, Ippolyt, Lebedyev, Rogozhin, Aglaia, Nastasya - all these people experiencing Russian society in the process of moving towards modernity are affected by one or several of its aspects. They try to deal with modernity ad hoc, without a recipe, and suffer from confusion. When she says she wants to become an educator, to DO something, she shows the spirit of future entrepreneurship, including women in active life. But she embraces the idea of ownership and control, and in order to own Myshkin, she acts out a despicably arrogant farce in front of a vulnerable rival, using as a weapon her privilege and chastity. A flawed but interesting character for sure. She would have been utterly unhappy, had she reached her goal. Blinded by passion but capable of sincere feeling and fidelity, he is a true lover, yet driven to madness and criminal behaviour. He admits to his crimes and accepts the following punishment. The abused child who takes out the punishment on herself, like anorexic or self-harming young girls nowadays, convinced that the harm done to them is a sign of their own filthiness. Myshkin drives her over the edge with his condescending pity and forgiveness - by enforcing her idea of guilt and worthlessness. As if Myshkin had any right to claim superiority! He seals her fate when he remains completely passive in the showdown between her and arrogant, impertinent Aglaia, and then creates an atmosphere of self-sacrifice during the wedding preparations: What is the ultimate feeling, closing the book after days of frenzied engagement with the characters? Let the Devils haunt me next!

**Chapter 8 : Prince Lyov Myshkin**

*In The Idiot, through one night and into morning, Prince Myshkin holds and strokes the murderer Rogozhin. Nearby them in the bed, Nastasya's dead body. Nearby them in the bed, Nastasya's dead body.*

He proves himself a master of calligraphy and is hired by General Epanchin, who finds that he is strangely fond of the prince. In the midst of the quarreling, Nastasya appears. Nastasya is polite to the Ivolgins only momentarily. Rogozhin is shocked to discover Nastasya, but he is not deterred from his purpose in coming. He offers to buy Nastasya from Ganya; then, he offers to pay a final bid of , rubles to Nastasya " in exchange for herself. The company is thrown into an uproar. Varya condemns Nastasya, and Ganya, lashing out to slap his sister, strikes Myshkin, who has stepped in front of the girl. This chivalry quiets the party and, after Rogozhin and Nastasya leave, Myshkin is taken to his room. He is uninvited but is welcomed by Nastasya. After champagne is served and games are played, Nastasya announces that, at last, she will reveal whether or not she has decided to marry Ganya Ivolgin. She turns to Myshkin and says that his decision will be her fate. Myshkin whispers that she must not marry Ganya and, amidst loud protestations, Rogozhin and his noisy band of followers are ushered in. Rogozhin has brought the , rubles he promised to pay Nastasya, but Nastasya changes her mind; she will begin her new life penniless. Under those conditions, no one would have her. Myshkin objects; he would marry her and he reveals that he is heir to a fortune of a million and a half rubles. Myshkin follows the couple, and after the three live for a time in Moscow where Nastasya decides to marry Rogozhin, then refuses, and comes to Myshkin for comfort , Myshkin returns to Petersburg. He visits Lebedyev a fellow he met on the train with Rogozhin and also visits Rogozhin. The girl is not at home but Myshkin senses that Rogozhin has followed him. He is correct; Rogozhin has followed Myshkin to see if he would go to Nastasya as the victorious suitor. Rogozhin then follows Myshkin back to his hotel and attempts to murder the prince but Myshkin suffers an epileptic attack when he realizes that it is Rogozhin who is hiding in the dark with a raised knife. Before the Epanchins, the young men demand money from Myshkin; he is not the true son of Pavlishtchev, while Burdovsky one of the intruders is, although illegitimate, and they demand that Myshkin give Burdovsky his rightful inheritance. Madame Epanchin is aghast at such unnecessary extravagance and, after Ippolit, one of the young men, damns the company, she gathers up her family and leaves. Soon afterward, Myshkin accompanies the Epanchins and friends to the park, and when Nastasya enters, and is insulted, Myshkin rushes to her aid and defends her from the wrath of an army officer. Aglaia is sure that Myshkin will be forced to duel with the officer, but Myshkin is unconcerned. He celebrates his birthday and, afterward, the company listens to Ippolit as he reads a long testament describing his thoughts on death and life, then raises a pocket pistol to his temple and fires. There is no cap in the gun and the company roars in laughter. Ippolit swears that he meant to kill himself, then collapses. Unable to sleep, Myshkin goes walking in the park, falls asleep on a bench, and is awakened by Aglaia Epanchin. She tells Myshkin that she can no longer bear her family and that she wants to elope with Myshkin to Europe. Myshkin says that the idea is preposterous and, suddenly, Madame Epanchin stands before them demanding an explanation. After Myshkin confesses that he would like to marry Aglaia, and Aglaia consents, a betrothal party is planned: Myshkin must be introduced to Petersburg society. The party is a disaster. Myshkin launches into one of his long-winded, emotional tirades " this time against the Catholic church " breaks an expensive vase, and finally collapses in an epileptic seizure. Rogozhin is also there and he and Myshkin witness a violent argument between the two women. Nastasya has hoped to arrange a marriage between Aglaia and Myshkin, but Aglaia accuses Nastasya of toying with the prince and damns her for her past and for her corrupting Myshkin. To retaliate, Nastasya reminds Aglaia that Myshkin has promised to marry her and that she can force him to do so. Myshkin acquiesces and tries to follow Aglaia as she runs from the house, but turns to aid Nastasya when he sees that she has fainted. The wedding is arranged and Myshkin waits at the church for Nastasya. Nastasya, however, has changed her mind again. She cannot bring herself to marry the prince; he is too good and she too tarnished. She asks Rogozhin to take her away. Myshkin is told that the two have fled and he goes into Petersburg and finally finds Rogozhin waiting for him. He has killed her and laid her on a bed. She is covered

with good leather and surrounded by bottles of uncorked disinfectant. Myshkin ministers to the feverish Rogozhin, soothing his brow and cheeks, and when the two are discovered, Rogozhin is babbling and Myshkin has lost his sanity. Eventually Rogozhin recovers from brain fever and is tried and sentenced to Siberia. Myshkin is taken back to Dr. Next Character List Pop Quiz! Are you an idiot?

**Chapter 9 : The Idiot by Fyodor Dostoyevsky - Free at Loyal Books**

*Instead of a mad killer, Prince Myshkin the 'Idiot' is an innocent saint, a positive, a beautiful soul and holy fool motivated by love.* • Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot* At once 'The Idiot' is a complicated, beautiful and yet ultimately a somewhat flawed novel.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: The objectivity of the scientist is often rejected by the romantic writer. Similarly, the mysticism of the artist is in distinct contrast to the reductionism of many scientists. Despite this apparent dichotomy, there remains a unity of art and science. Utilizing different media, artist and scientist alike strive to identify and describe essential truths. A striking example of this unity of art and science involves the neurosurgeon, Wilder Penfield, and the author, Marcel Proust. An equally striking parallel exists in the work of the Russian author, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and contemporary theories regarding psychic disorders in epilepsy. In his novel *The Idiot* [4] Dostoevsky constructs an elaborate tale centered on the life and experiences of an epileptic hero, Prince Myshkin. Dostoevsky presents a lucid and accurate description of epileptic seizures and the effect of epilepsy on the life of an individual. Such sensitivity and insight into the nature of this illness are not surprising; Dostoevsky was himself epileptic [5]. In this novel written more than a century ago he describes an epileptic seizure: The epilepsy itself comes on instantaneously. At this moment the face is suddenly horribly distorted, especially the eyes. Convulsions and spasms seize the Essay received honorable mention in the first Dwight J. Ingle Memorial Writing Award for authors under 18. A terrible, incredible scream, unlike anything imaginable, breaks forth; and with this cry all resemblance to a human being seems suddenly to disappear. It is actually as if someone else was screaming, inside the person. About an hour later, the prince began to understand fairly well what was going on around him. The recurrent generalized seizure. The motor activity soon terminates, leaving the patient in a state of coma, which lasts for many minutes or even as long as a half-hour. As the coma recedes, mental confusion, drowsiness, and headache become evident. As early as b. In contrast to the title, this medical writing argued that epilepsy was not a sacred disease involving an act of possession by spirits [7, p. Hippocrates attributed epilepsy to a softening of the brain secondary to flooding and disintegration of the cerebral tissue by phlegm [8]. At various other times in history, epilepsy was believed to be the result of supernatural forces, irritating or toxic substances, or the humors. As late as the seventeenth century, epilepsy was believed to be an infectious disease, which no doubt accounted for some of the social ostracism associated with the illness. In Thomas Willis departed from traditional medical thinking when he stated that all seizures must arise in the brain and attributed the epileptic muscle movements to chemical reactions in the central nervous