

AP Lit. Work Summary Sheet



Title and Author of the Work: Resurrection by Leo Tolstoy

Two Opening Sentences

Staring in horror at the wizened face of a starving infant on one of his estates, Prince Dmitry Nekhludoff is forced to confront his moral responsibility for the suffering of the peasants on his land.

Torn by guilt from his seduction and abandonment of the servant Maslova, Prince Dmitry Nekhludoff abandons a life of comfort and wealth in Leo Tolstoy's Resurrection, beginning a long journey that will lead him both to the waste of Siberia and the promise of a new, moral life.

The Protagonist and Any Important Details

The protagonist of Resurrection is Prince Dmitry Nekhludoff, a vain, wealthy noble who, despite his great wealth and prestige in society, finds his life to be increasingly empty of real meaning. A chance encounter with Katusha Maslova, a woman he seduced and abandoned, during her trial for murder, begins a journey of self-discovery in which he is resurrected as a Christian man in the Tolstoyan model.

Significant Secondary Characters

- ***Katusha Maslova**—a young servant, seduced and abandoned by Nekhludoff, who later becomes a prostitute and a prisoner in Siberia.*
- ***Selenin**—a friend of the young Nekhludoff, Selenin is a lawyer who has abandoned his youthful idealism for status and a wife he doesn't love.*
- ***Sophia and Mary Ivanovna**—Nekhludoff's aunts*
- ***Missy**—the society woman that Nekhludoff is sworn to at the beginning of the novel.*
- ***Simonson**—a fellow prisoner, an ascetic who wants to marry Maslova despite her past and his vow of celibacy.*

5 Significant Plot Points Worth Remembering

1. *Nekhludoff returning to the town where he seduced Maslova—as she waits for him at the train station in the pouring rain, running alongside the track, he deliberately or unconsciously pulls down the shade on the train window, forgetting his past.*
2. *The ridiculous behavior of the judges at the trial—including the one who wants to hurry for his mistress and the other who makes decisions by diving numbers in his head.*
3. *Nekhludoff's description of his guilt over Maslova as the desire to strangle "a game bird in a bag" or as bees who seal in "a nest of wax-worms."*
4. *Nekhludoff's final temptation, the love he feels for the socialite Mariette.*
5. *Katusha's desire to leave prostitution and begin a new life before a new group of clients arrive, leading her back to years of drinking and debauchery.*

Major Themes/Philosophical Arguments of the Work

- *Tolstoy's simplified version of Christianity: the Sermon on the Mount*
- *The idea of resurrection as a slow gradual process of renewal, rather than a sudden rebirth.*
- *The pre-Freudian psychology of the struggle between the animal man (Id) and the spiritual man.*
- *Tolstoy's ascetic: belief in a life not consumed by desire for physical or material pleasures.*