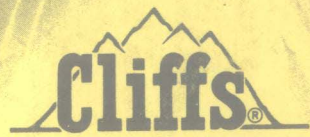


**CLIFFS NOTES on**

**\$2.50**

**TOLSTOY'S**

# **WAR AND PEACE**



**Cliffs**<sup>®</sup>  
**NOTES** INC.

YOUR KEY TO THE CLASSICS

# WAR AND PEACE

## NOTES

*including*

- *Life of Leo Tolstoy*
- *Synopsis of War and Peace*
- *List of Main Characters*
- *Summaries and Commentaries*
- *Character Analysis*
- *Structure, Themes, Technical Devices*
- *Questions for Discussion*
- *Selected Bibliography*

*by*

*Marianne Sturman*



INCORPORATED

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68501

**Editor**

*Gary Carey, M.A.*  
*University of Colorado*

**Consulting Editor**

*James L. Roberts, Ph.D.*  
*Department of English*  
*University of Nebraska*

---

ISBN 0-8220-1366-5

© Copyright 1967

by

**C. K. Hillegass**

All Rights Reserved

Printed in U.S.A.

# CONTENTS

LIFE OF LEO TOLSTOY . . . . . 5

SYNOPSIS OF "WAR AND PEACE" . . . . . 8

## LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

Bolkonsky Family . . . . . 12

Bezuхов Family . . . . . 13

Rostov Family . . . . . 13

Kuragin Family . . . . . 14

Major Historical Figures . . . . . 14

Other Characters . . . . . 15

## SUMMARIES AND COMMENTARIES

Part I . . . . . 15

Part II . . . . . 24

Part III . . . . . 28

Part IV . . . . . 32

Part V . . . . . 36

Part VI . . . . . 42

Part VII . . . . . 49

Part VIII . . . . . 51

Part IX . . . . . 57

Part X . . . . . 63

Part XI . . . . . 71

Part XII . . . . . 78

Part XIII . . . . . 83

Part XIV . . . . . 85

Part XV . . . . . 88

First Epilogue . . . . .	92
Second Epilogue . . . . .	96
<b>CHARACTER ANALYSIS</b>	
Pierre Bezuhov . . . . .	102
Prince Andrey Bolkonsky . . . . .	103
Natasha Rostov . . . . .	104
Nikolay Rostov . . . . .	105
Historical Figures . . . . .	105
<b>STRUCTURE . . . . .</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>THEMES . . . . .</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>TECHNICAL DEVICES</b>	
Transitions . . . . .	110
Symbols . . . . .	110
Physical Description . . . . .	111
Irony . . . . .	111
Interior Monolog . . . . .	112
<b>QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION . . . . .</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .</b>	<b>113</b>

# War and Peace

## LIFE OF LEO TOLSTOY

Leo Nicolaevich Tolstoy (1828-1910) was the next to youngest of five children, descending from one of the oldest and best families in Russia. His youthful surroundings were of the upper-class gentry of the last period of serfdom. Though his life spanned the westernization of Russia, his early intellectual and cultural education was the traditional eighteenth-century training. Lyovochka (as he was called) was a tender, affection-seeking child who liked to do things "out of the ordinary." Self-consciousness was one of his youthful attributes and this process of self-scrutiny continued all his life. Indeed, Tolstoy's life is one of the best documented accounts we have of any writer, for the diaries he began at seventeen he continued through old age.

In 1844 Leo attended the University of Kazan, then one of the great seats of learning east of Berlin. He early showed a contempt for academic learning but became interested enough at the faculty of jurisprudence (the easiest course of study) to attend classes with some regularity. Kazan, next to St. Petersburg and Moscow, was a great social center for the upper class. An eligible, titled young bachelor, Tolstoy devoted his energies to engage in the brilliant social life of his set. But his homely peasant face was a constant source of embarrassment and Tolstoy took refuge in queer and original behavior. His contemporaries called him "Lyovochka the bear," for he was always stiff and awkward.

Before his second-year examinations, Tolstoy left Kazan to settle at his ancestral estate, Yasnaya Polyana (Bright Meadow), which was his share of the inheritance. Intending to farm and devote himself to improve the lot of his peasants, Tolstoy's youthful idealism soon vanished as he confronted the insurmountable distrust of the peasantry. He set off for Moscow in 1848 and for two years lived the irregular and dissipated life led by young men of his class. The diaries of this period reveal the critical self-scrutiny with which he regarded all his actions, and he itemized each deviation from his code of perfect behavior. Carnal lust and gambling were those passions most difficult for him to exorcise. As he closely observed the life around him in Moscow, Tolstoy experienced an irresistible urge to write. This time was the birth of

the creative artist and the following year saw the publication of his first story, *Childhood*.

Tolstoy began his army career in 1852, joining his brother Nicolai in the Caucasus. Garrisoned among a string of Cossack outposts on the borders of Georgia, Tolstoy participated in occasional expeditions against the fierce Chechenians, the Tartar natives rebelling against Russian rule. He spent the rest of his time gambling, hunting, fornicating.

Torn amidst his inner struggle between his bad and good impulses, Tolstoy arrived at a sincere belief in God, though not in the formalized sense of the Eastern Church. The wild primitive environment of the Caucasus satisfied Tolstoy's intense physical and spiritual needs. Admiring the free, passionate, natural life of the mountain natives, he wished to turn his back forever on sophisticated society with its falseness and superficiality.

Soon after receiving his commission, Tolstoy fought among the defenders at Sevastopol against the Turks. In his *Sevastopol* sketches he describes with objectivity and compassion the matter-of-fact bravery of the Russian officers and soldiers during the siege.

By now he was a writer of nationwide reputation and when he resigned from the army and went to Petersburg, Turgenev offered him hospitality. With the leader of the capital's literary world for sponsor, Tolstoy became an intimate member of the circle of important writers and editors. But he failed to get on with these litterateurs: he had no respect for their ideal of European progress, and their intellectual arrogance appalled him. His lifelong antagonism with Turgenev typified this relationship.

His travels abroad in 1857 started Tolstoy toward his lifelong revolt against the whole organization of modern civilization. To promote the growth of individual freedom and self-awareness, he started a unique village school at Yasnaya Polyana based on futuristic progressive principles. The peasant children "brought only themselves, their receptive natures, and the certainty that it would be as jolly in school today as yesterday." But the news of his brother's illness interrupted his work. Traveling to join Nicolai in France, he first made a tour of inspection throughout the German school system. He was at his brother's side when Nicolai died at the spa near Marseilles, and this death affected him deeply. Only his work saved him from the worse depressions and sense of futility he felt toward life.

The fundamental aim of Tolstoy's nature was a search for truth, for the meaning of life, for the ultimate aims of art, for family happiness, for God. In marriage his soul found a release from this never ending quest, and once approaching his ideal of family happiness, Tolstoy entered upon the greatest creative period of his life.

In the first fifteen years of his marriage to Sonya (Sofya Andreyevna Bers) the great inner crisis he later experienced in his "conversion" was procrastinated, lulled by the triumph of spontaneous life over questioning reason. While his nine children grew up, his life was happy, almost idyllic, despite the differences which arose between him and the wife sixteen years his junior. As an inexperienced bride of eighteen, the city bred Sonya had many difficult adjustments to make. She was the mistress of a country estate as well as the helpmate of a man whose previous life she had not shared. Her constant pregnancies and boredom and loneliness marred the great love she and Tolstoy shared. In this exhilarating period of his growing family, Tolstoy created the epic novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* while Sonya, rejoicing at his creative genius, faithfully turned his rough drafts into fair copy.

Toward the end of 1866, while writing *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy entered on the prolonged and fateful crisis which resulted in his conversion. He recorded part of this spiritual struggle in *Anna Karenina*. The meaning of life consists in living according to one's "inner goodness," he concluded. Only through emotional and religious commitment can one discover this natural truth. Uniquely interpreting the Gospels, Tolstoy discovered Christ's entire message was contained in the idea "that ye resist not evil." This doctrine of "non-resistance" became the foundation of Tolstoyism, where one lived according to nature, renouncing the artificial refinements of society. Self-gratification, Tolstoy believed, perverted man's inherent goodness. Therefore property rights—ownership by one person of "things that belong to all"—is a chief source of evil, Carnal lust, ornamental clothing, fancy food are other symptoms of the corrupting influence of civilization. In accordance with his beliefs, Tolstoy renounced all copyrights to his works since 1881, divided his property among his family members, dressed in peasant homespun, ate only vegetables, gave up liquor and tobacco, engaged in manual work, and even learned to cobble his own boots. Renouncing creative art on account of its corrupt refinements, Tolstoy wrote polemic tracts and short stories which embodied his new faith.

But the incongruity of his ideals and his actual environment grieved Tolstoy. With his family, he lived in affluence. His wife and children



(except for Alexandra) disapproved of his philosophy. As they became more estranged and embittered by their differences, Sonya's increasing hysteria made his latter years a torment for Tolstoy.

All three stages of Tolstoy's life and writings (pre-conversion, conversion, effects of conversion) reflect the single quest of his career: to find the ultimate truth of human existence. After finding this truth, his life was a series of struggles to practice his preachings. He became a public figure both as a sage and an artist during his lifetime and Yasnaya Polyana became a mecca for a never-ceasing stream of pilgrims. The intensity and heroic scale of his life have been preserved for us from the memoirs of friends and family and wisdom seeking visitors. Though Tolstoy expressed his philosophy and theory of history with the same thoroughness and lucidity he devoted to his novels, he is known today chiefly for his important contributions to literature. Although his artistic influence is wide and still pervasive, few writers have achieved the personal stature with which to emulate his epic style.

## **SYNOPSIS OF WAR AND PEACE**

### **PART I**

We are introduced to the major families through the vehicle of a soirée at the Anna Pavlovna's home, a name-day celebration at the Rostovs, and a description of the isolated existence of the Bolkonskys at their country seat. Prince Andrey and Pierre discuss their futures and what they seek in life, both young men idealizing the "man of destiny" who is soon to invade Russia. Old Count Bezuhov dies, leaving Pierre wealthy, titled, and the most eligible bachelor in Petersburg.

### **PART II**

Nikolay Rostov and Prince Andrey undergo their first war experience at the battle of Schöngraben. They each discover the ineffectuality of the individual in a mass situation. Nikolay accepts being a "cog in a machine" and Andrey rejects being part of the administering forces, choosing, instead, to fight at the front.

### **PART III**

Pierre marries Ellen; Anatole unsuccessfully courts Marya. Andrey attends the war council on the eve of Austerlitz and wishes to be a hero.

He is wounded during the battle. Compared to the limitless sky, which symbolizes death, Napoleon seems to Andrey petty and insignificant.

#### PART IV

Nikolay, with Denisov, is home on leave and he ignores his sweetheart Sonya. Pierre wounds Dolohov in a duel over Ellen's alleged infidelity. Liza Bolkonsky dies giving birth to a son, leaving Andrey with a deep sense of unassuageable guilt. Dolohov falls in love with Sonya, avenges her rejection of him by fleecing Nikolay during a card game. "Intensity" is the keynote of this section, shown by incidents of love and hate, life and death.

#### PART V

Separated from his wife, Pierre devotes himself to "goodness," by joining the masons and by an inept reforming of his estates. He and the retired Andrey have a discussion about the meaning of life and death and Andrey is inspired with new hope. The significance of their exchange points out the contrast between Pierre and Andrey. Meanwhile Nikolay has rejoined his starving regiment and Denisov faces court-martial for stealing food for his men. Nikolay asks the tsar for Denisov's pardon and witnesses the meeting between Napoleon and Alexander, a meeting between the old and new orders of government. His petition rejected, Nikolay decides the sovereign knows best and submits to "higher authority."

#### PART VI

This is an account of "real life," as opposed to politics, where the "inner man" is more significant than the "outer man." Andrey becomes involved with Speransky's circle of reformers, but when he falls in love with Natasha these activities pall for him. Pierre becomes disillusioned with masonry, while Princess Marya is made more unhappy by her father. The Rostovs' financial problems increase, and Andrey goes to Switzerland.

#### PART VII

With the wolf hunt, the sleigh ride, Christmas celebrations, and family harmony, the Rostovs enjoy the last period of their "youth." Natasha's restlessness increases during Andrey's absence, the family is almost bankrupt, and there is foreboding of hard times to come as the children enter adulthood.

## **PART VIII**

Natasha meets Anatole during the opera and is almost abducted by him. During her near-nervous breakdown, Pierre emerges as her comforter and their love is implied.

## **PART IX**

The life-and-death struggle against France begins, with Napoleon depicted as a glory-seeking fool. Andrey turns away from his past and commits himself to the men in his regiment, who adore him. Nikolay refrains from killing a Frenchman and is decorated for bravery because he took a prisoner. Natasha slowly recovers, aided by religious faith. Petya joins the army out of a youthful patriotism which Pierre also shares. The Russians respond massively to the national threat, and Pierre feels within him an "ultimate mission" involving his love, the comet, Napoleon, the war itself.

## **PART X**

The French penetrating Russia march toward their doom in the "irresistible tide" of destiny. The old prince dies and Marya moves her household to Moscow, but the war looms closer. Despite the national upheaval, the Petersburg salons remain the same. Marya and Nikolay have a romantic first meeting, while Pierre visits the death-marked Andrey on the eve of Borodino. The battle is described as a death duel, with the Russians winning morally, if not physically. This marks the turning point from defeat to victory for Russia.

## **PART XI**

Tolstoy discusses mass activity as a combination of "infinitesimal units of activity" and provides a short summary of past and future events. Moscow's abandonment and burning is the great deed that saves Russia and the moment-by-moment details of the event are discussed, including Rastoptchin's last-minute bid for glory at the expense of the cause he pretends to further. The Rostovs leave Moscow, their caravan including the mortally wounded Prince Andrey. He is reunited with Natasha, who nurses him. So close to death, Andrey understands the quality of divine love. Truth results from a life-death confrontation. Pierre conceives the plan to assassinate Napoleon, but other incidents show he is destined to fail.

## PART XII

Nikolay and Marya meet again in the provinces, and Marya travels to see her brother. She and Natasha are with him when he dies. Pierre is nearly executed by the French, who accuse him of incendiarism. He experiences a "rebirth" in prison through Karataev, an almost mythic figure symbolizing the unity of love and hate, life and death.

## PART XIII

End of war is in sight as the French retreat more and more rapidly. Their retreat is the "fruit" of "unconscious activity" rather than the will of Napoleon. Pierre discovers an intense freedom in prison.

## PART XIV

This period of guerilla fighting involves Denisov, Dolohov, and Petya, who gets killed. A surprise attack led by Denisov and Dolohov frees Pierre and other prisoners. In a flashback we learn how Karataev died, what Pierre suffered and overcame during the death march. Death and decay are part of the processes of life and growth.

## PART XV

Natasha and Marya are recalled from their mourning into active life: Marya by her household responsibilities, Natasha by exercising love to comfort her bereaved mother. As the war history is over, Kutuzov's career ends. A new era begins to disclose itself with Russia's entrance into international leadership. Tolstoy apotheosizes Kutuzov. Pierre and Natasha meet again.

## FIRST EPILOGUE

Tolstoy details the "happy ending" of the careers of his fictional characters in scenes to show the domestic happiness of Nikolay and Marya Rostov, Natasha and Pierre Bezuhov. The cycle of life begins anew as Nikolinka, Andrey's son, comes of age and desires to be like Pierre and like his father.

## SECOND EPILOGUE

This is the philosophical exegesis wherein Tolstoy shows that "free will" is a mere construct which historians use to explain the movements of nations and people. Causality is impossible to descry

when we regard the pattern of historical events, and the concept of “free will” prevents deep understanding of the nature of history. The paradox, however, is inescapable: we need to maintain the illusion of free will in order to carry on our daily lives, for our hopes, our basic beliefs depend on this notion of an inner consciousness; at the same time we are victims of innumerable and infinitesimal constraints of necessity which spell out our destiny and we are not “free” at all.

## LIST OF MAIN CHARACTERS

### BOLKONSKY FAMILY

#### *Prince Nikolay Andrei[vi]tch Bolkonsky*

Scion of an ancient and honorable family, now an old man, who clings more and more to the values of an outdated feudal society.

#### *Prince Andrey Bolkonsky*

His son and heir, who is an intensely intellectual, basically egotistical young man who seeks to exchange his sense of alienation for a sense of being at one with the world. His quest affirms his nihilism.

#### *Princess Marya Bolkonsky*

A plain, graceless young woman who sustains her lonely life by a strong Christian piety.

#### *Mademoiselle Bourienne*

Marya’s companion, an orphaned Frenchwoman of a frivolous and opportunistic nature.

#### *Nikolushka, later Nikolinka*

Prince Andrey’s son, who attains adolescence by the end of the novel.

#### *Princess Liza Bolkonsky*

Andrey’s wife, a silly, chattering society girl who never grows up and who dies in childbirth.

## BEZUHOV FAMILY

### *Count Kirill Vladmirovitch Bezuhov*

An old man, once a grandee in Catherine's court, who dies early in the novel after legitimizing his oldest son, to whom he leaves vast wealth.

### *Pierre Bezuhov*

The hero of the novel and the old count's son, whose spiritual development is the best expression of Tolstoy's philosophy.

## ROSTOV FAMILY

### *Count Ilya Rostov*

A gregarious, good-natured, and generous family man whose interest in maintaining his family's pleasures contributes to his financial ruination.

### *Countess Natalya Rostov*

His wife, a typical Russian noblewoman, whose main interests center within the family.

### *Natasha Rostov*

The heroine of the novel and a bewitching young girl whom Tolstoy regards as the creature-manifestation of love, nature, and femininity.

### *Nikolay Rostov*

The oldest son, who is an officer in the hussars and who later marries Marya Bolkonsky. He is an unimaginative young man who believes that doing one's duty is the highest virtue of the individual.

### *Vera Rostov*

The eldest child, who marries Alphonse Berg, an opportunistic youth of German descent.

### *Petya Rostov*

The youngest child, whose vivacity is closest to that of Natasha and who dies prematurely near the end of the war.

### *Sonya*

The Rostov's poor relation whom they raise with their own children. She devotes her life to loving Nikolay but never marries him.

***Boris Drubetskoy***

Son of a friend of Countess Rostov who has been educated with the Rostov children. Boris becomes important in court circles and is a career-man in the army.

**KURAGIN FAMILY*****Prince Vassily***

A well-practiced courtier whose life is a series of political and social maneuvers to maintain prestige.

***Ippolit Kuragin***

His dull-witted son, who would like to compromise Andrey's wife, Liza.

***Anatole Kuragin***

An avowed hedonist whose handsomeness attracts both Princess Marya, whom he would like to marry for her fortune, and Natasha, whom he all but seduces.

***Ellen Kuragin, later Countess Bezuhov***

A beautiful sensualist who married Pierre and who becomes a celebrated *salonniere*.

**MAJOR HISTORICAL FIGURES*****Napoleon***

Tolstoy uses him as the outstanding example of the "great man" who is so deluded by his own mystique he cannot see himself as history's unwitting tool.

***Kutuzov***

Commander-in-chief of the Russian forces, whom Tolstoy apotheosizes as the "Russian of Russians" whose intuitive power and humble self-image contribute to the victory.

***Alexander I***

Tsar of the Russias whose divine-right function denies his personal existence. He is depicted as a noble figurehead.

***Speransky***

The intellectual young secretary of state whom Tolstoy treats ironically. Speransky believes his motives are to liberalize and enlighten the operations of government, whereas his real motives are to belittle others.

***Wintzengerode, Pfuhl, Weierother, and others***

Prussian generals whom Tolstoy makes fun of for their mechanistic and "scientific" interest in war.

***Prince Bagration***

General hailed as the "hero of Austerlitz." Tolstoy shows that in reality he was a passive leader in the midst of numerous, separate events which compose the battle of Austerlitz.

**OTHER CHARACTERS*****Platon Karataev***

More symbolic than real, this peasant is Pierre's fellow prisoner and the inspiration of Bezuhov's conversion.

***Vaska Denisov***

Captain of Nikolay's regiment who falls in love with, and is rejected by, Natasha. He is Nikolay's mentor in battle and performs the same function later for Petya Rostov.

***Dolohov***

Penniless cardsharp, notorious as a bully. His cruelty and bravery play a part in various incidents in the novel.

***Anna Pavlovna Scherer***

Celebrated St. Petersburg hostess who constantly schemes to maintain her prestige in court circles.

**SUMMARIES AND COMMENTARIES****PART I****CHAPTERS 1-6*****Summary***

Anna Pavlovna talks with Prince Vassily Kuragin, the first guest to arrive at one of her soirées in 1805. "Chère Annette" is a forty-year-old spinster who runs one of the most celebrated salons in Petersburg, and



as usual, her manner of speaking expresses enthusiasm whether she feels it or not. She speaks of Napoleon as the Antichrist scourging Europe, asserting that the lofty-souled Alexander I must save them all against the "hydra of revolution" Bonaparte represents. Easily changing the subject, she tells Prince Vassily how charming his three children are, and that she knows a wealthy heiress to match with his profligate son, Anatole. The lady is Princess Marya Bolkonsky, who lives in the country and is dominated by her old father. Her brother Prince Andrey will appear here this evening with his wife Liza. Annette promises to speak to Liza about this matter.

With all her guests arrived, Anna Pavlovna supervises them smoothly, making sure each conversation group avoids controversy as well as boredom. The "little princess," Liza Bolkonsky, chatters eagerly. Although visibly pregnant, and once considered the most seductive young woman in Petersburg, she still makes every man she speaks to feel successful and masculine. But when she addresses her husband in the same coquettish manner she uses for casual acquaintances, Prince Andrey turns away with an involuntary grimace. His bored expression is a vivid contrast to the liveliness of his little wife. Anna Pavlovna is uncomfortable when Pierre Bezuhov arrives, for he is bound to be rude. This is his first appearance in society since his return from abroad. An illegitimate son of Count Bezuhov, a celebrated dandy in the days of Catherine, Pierre's tall stout figure and his "clever, though shy, observant and natural look" distinguishes this mild, bespectacled young man. Prince Andrey's handsome face lights up for the first time when he sees Pierre, and from their greeting, it is obvious they are good friends. Prince Vassily's daughter, the beautiful Ellen, now arrives. She wears a radiant, unvarying smile as if to acknowledge her awareness of the splendid beauty barely hidden by her décolleté. As she and her father leave, an elderly lady accosts Prince Vassily, begging him to petition the emperor so her son Boris can transfer to the Guards. She is Anna Mihalovna Drubetskoy, a member of one of the best families in Russia. Now that she is poor and out of touch with her former connections, she appears uninvited at the soirée expressly to beg Prince Vassily's favor. Wearily the elderly courtier agrees to petition for her son.

When the guests talk of the assassination of the Duc d'Enghien, Anna Pavlovna's worst fears are realized. Pierre shocks everyone by his earnest defense of Bonaparte, who, he says, saved France from anarchy. Prince Andrey joins in, defending Napoleon's action. The tension subsides when Ippolit, Prince Vassily's dull-witted son, tells a pointless