

*Crime and Punishment* was first published in the conservative journal *The Russian Messenger*, appearing in twelve monthly installments in 1866. In September of 1865 Dostoevsky wrote a letter to M. N. Katkov, the editor of *The Russian Messenger*, attempting to persuade Katkov to accept the novel and to publish it in his journal. To show Katkov that the new novel was suitable for publication in a conservative journal, Dostoevsky outlined its content and idea as follows:

"The idea of the novel cannot, as far as I can see, contradict the tenor of your journal; in fact, the very opposite is true. The novel is a psycho-logical account of a crime. A young man of middle-class origin who is living in dire need is expelled from the university. From superficial and weak thinking, having been influenced by certain "unfinished" ideas in the air, he decides to get himself out of a difficult situation quickly by killing an old woman, a usurer and widow of a government servant. The old woman is crazy, deaf, sick, greedy, and evil. She charges scandalous rates of interest, devours the well-being of others, and, having reduced her younger sister to the state of a servant, oppresses her with work. She is good for nothing. "Why does she live?" "Is she useful to anyone at all?" These and other questions carry the young man's mind astray. He decides to kill and rob her so as to make his mother, who is living in the provinces, happy; to save his sister from the libidinous importunities of the head of the estate where she is serving as a lady's companion; and then to finish his studies, go abroad and be for the rest of his life honest, firm, and unflinching in fulfilling his humanitarian duty toward mankind. This would, according to him, "make up for the crime," if one can call this act a crime, which is committed against an old, deaf, crazy, evil, sick woman, who does not know why she is living and who would perhaps die in a month anyway. Despite the fact that such crimes are usually done with great difficulty because criminals always leave rather obvious clues and leave much to chance, which almost always betrays them, he is able to commit his crime, completely by chance, quickly and successfully. After this, a month passes before events come to a definite climax. There is not, nor can there be, any suspicion of him. After the act the psycho-logical process of the crime unfolds. Questions which he cannot resolve well up in the murderer; feelings he had not foreseen or suspected torment his heart. God's truth and earthly law take their toll, and he feels forced at last to give himself up. He is forced even if it means dying in prison, so that he may once again be part of the people. The feeling of separation and isolation from mankind, nature, and the law of truth take their toll. The criminal decides to accept suffering so as to redeem his deed. But it is difficult for me to explain in full my thinking."

The following points summarize the major critical approaches to *Crime and Punishment*:

- (1) The novel is a political pamphlet, written to attack the progressive ideology of the time.
- (2) It is a social document, reflecting the evils of the time, despite Dostoevsky's clearly anti-progressive sentiments.
- (3) It is a psychological study, a realistic novel in which Dostoevsky has captured the workings of a specific period of history and a specific type of society on the minds of his characters, especially the character of Raskolnikov.
- (4) The novel is not realistic, but symbolic, and portrays the conflict of different ideas on the battlefield of man himself; not historical, individual man, but man in all times and places. The

goal is to measure the relative merits of the ideas, rather than to portray their effect upon individual people.

Select the approach you most agree with. Research the historical, social, psychological, and/or political components contributing. You will need to include and submit the following:

- a) A research outline (bullet points, Venn diagram, paraphrased passages, etc.) of your factual findings regarding your chosen approach. The contents of these notes will depend upon your topic, of course. Regardless, you should have a minimum of two pages of handwritten notes. Do NOT simply copy and paste passages you find to supplement your essay. These should be YOUR conclusions of points you wish to highlight: tidbits and facts you find interesting or important.
- b) Your notes and observations on Raskolnikov as we've progressed through the novel. Review these to see if/how your opinion was altered. You'll include this information with your critical analysis of the novel as a whole.
- c) A print out of ONE academic journal article pertaining to your chosen critique. Annotate it. Choose a minimum of ONE quote to include in your essay. \* Note- you **MANY NOT** use the Chijioke Uwasomba article. I am fully aware this is the first hit from a basic Google search- not even Google Scholar- let alone an online database. Use academic journals.
- d) A chapter summary from a biography on Dostoevsky OR a book on the historical or psychological influence you're focused on. This must be from an **ACTUAL PHYSICAL** book you open and peruse on PAPER pages. I'm old school. Go to the library. Lane's library or your neighborhood library. Be sure to record the bibliographical information.
- e) **YOUR CRITICAL ESSAY.** This should be a minimum of three (3) pages and a maximum of five (5). Follow the format of the essays you research and cite. Remember: no first person, use active voice, present tense, and an authoritative tone. You are an expert!
- f) Bibliography in MLA format.

DUE: Wednesday, 22 March IN CLASS. **NO LATE WORK. SERIOUSLY.**

Outline, Notes, Biographical or Historical Information: 50

Article Annotations: 50

Essay: 150

Total points: 250