

Driscoll – English III AP  
Required Reading for the Summer  
Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Congratulations on becoming a junior! To help prepare you for the AP exam, college, or just to better your mind, I have selected this classic for you to read. It is a novel of complexity and depth and not an easy read. Do not wait until August to begin this reading assignment. It is a Russian novel with several translations. I use the version translated by Sidney Monas but any unabridged version will do. Read the following notes before starting the novel.

Russian Names

One of the confusing things about Russian literature is the fact people are identified by three names and these names are generally not common in the English language. The first name is a given name such as “Rodion” or “Avdotya” (they are brother and sister in Crime and Punishment). The middle name is patronymic (coming from the father). Rodion and Avdotya’s father was named Roman. Women add a –evna or –ovna to their father’s name to form their middle name. Men add a –ch or –ich or –ovitch to form their’s. So, Avdotya’s middle name is Romanovna and Rodion’s middle name is Romanovitch. The third name is the family or surname. The girl’s full name is Avdotya Romanovna Raskolnikov and the boy’s is Rodion Romanovitch Raskolnikov. It was customary and polite to call someone by both their given name and their patronymic one. To complicate things, most Russian children went by nicknames. Rodion was called Rodia and Avdotya was called Dunia. Therefore do not be confused by the names. Dostoyevsky may call one character by several different names.

Cast of Characters - Spellings of names will vary in different translations, since the novel was originally written in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet.

Rodion Romanovitch Raskolnikov: The main character who is usually called Rodia or Raskolnikov. Raskolnikov literally translates into “one who is split.”

Avdotya Romanovna Raskolnikov: Rodia’s sister who is usually called Dunia.

Pulcheria Alexandrovna Raskolnikov: The widowed mother of the above two.

Semion Zakharovitch Marmelodov: A drunkard who figures prominently in an early conversation with Raskolnikov. Marmelad means jam or jelly.

Katherine Marmeladov: The wife of the above.

Sofia Semionovna Marmeladov: Daughter of Semion who prostitutes herself to support her family. She is called Sonia and later she falls in love with Raskolnikov. Sonia means “wisdom.”

Arkady Ivanovitch Svidrigailov: Dunia’s former employer who wants Dunia for himself. A man who will do anything to better his own situation.

Marfa Petrovna: Svidrigailov’s wife who dies and leaves Dunia a great deal of money.

Pyotor Petrovich Luzhin: A rich man who also wants Dunia to marry him. He feels he is doing her a favor. His name comically means “puddle.”

Dimitri Prokofitch Razhumikin: Raskolnikov’s best friend and protector of Dunia. Razum means “reason.”

Andre Semionovitch Lebezyatnikov: A liberal who lives in the same building as the Marmelodovs. Lebezit means to fawn on someone.

Porfiry Petrovich: The policeman who diligently pursues Raskolnikov’s crime.

Aliona Ivanovna: The Pawnbroker killed by Raskolnikov.

Lizaveta Ivanovna: The simple-minded sister of Aliona and a friend to Sonia.

Praskovya Pavlovna: Raskolnikov’s landlady.

Amalia Fyodorovna: Marmeladov’s landlady.

Kapernaumov: Sonia’s landlady.

Zossimov: A friend of Razhumikin and a doctor who cares for the sick Raskolnikov.

Nikodim Fomitch: Chief of police.

Zametov: A clerk in the police station and a friend of Razhumikin.

Nikolay and Dimitri: Painters, one who confesses to Raskolnikov’s crime.

Philosophy: Hegel and Nietzsche (Dostoyevsky studied both these men and their ideas are crucial to understanding Crime and Punishment)

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel - An influential German philosopher of the early 1800’s. His work and writings influenced generations of thinkers. Karl Marx was one who was a pupil of Hegel’s philosophy. Hegel believed that there were two types of men, extraordinary and ordinary. He felt it was the extraordinary man’s duty to do great things and ordinary man’s duty to obey them. Hegel believed that the ends justified the means. An extraordinary man could do anything (he was above the common law) if the outcome bettered society. As you read, think of whom in Crime and Punishment would fit this philosophy.

Friedrich Nietzsche – A philosopher and writer of the mid to late 1800’s who was a contemporary of the author Dostoyevsky. Nietzsche was also influential, inspiring those around him. Adolf Hitler was one who believed in and followed Nietzsche’s philosophy. Nietzsche believed that “God was dead” and that ancient morality did not apply to the modern world. He therefore thought that the new man had to come up with his own ethics in a world where God and an afterlife did not exist. Nietzsche also believed in two basic kinds of man. He coined the term “superman” for his superior human. Like Hegel, Nietzsche felt that the superman was above the law and should impose his will on the weak. Nietzsche believed in Darwin’s theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ and thought that the strong should consume the weak to keep the human race advancing. He felt that this is what advanced humans over the other animals of the earth. Nietzsche was unsympathetic to those who could not help themselves. Unlike Hegel, Nietzsche’s superior human or superman did not have to better society. Nietzsche’s superman did things for his own fulfillment or his own betterment, not mankind’s. Since Nietzsche did not believe in God or the retribution of an afterlife, he felt man owed it to himself to enjoy life to the fullest, in anyway that might be. Who in Crime and Punishment would

fit this philosophy? (Footnote: Although Nietzsche became extremely influential, popular, and famous at the end of his life, he was unaware of it. He suffered from what was almost certainly tertiary syphilis, and was hopelessly insane for the last ten years of his life.)

Summer Assignment – Read the novel thoroughly and take notes focusing on the topics listed below. You will be required to discuss (essay exam) one or more of the topics but you will not know which ones. Take notes on each topic. You may use any notes you have taken.

- 1) Trace Raskolnikov's psychological development from the murder he commits to his redemption at the end.
- 2) Apply the philosophy of Hegel and Nietzsche to the characters of Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov.
- 3) Consider the dreams presented in the novel and discuss their function for the character and the reader.
- 4) Explore the religious and biblical themes in the novel, especially the story of Lazarus.
- 5) Compare the endings of the characters of Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov. Why do they choose a different path?
- 6) Discuss Sonia's character and her worth as a human being.