**“War and Peace”: History, Fiction and “the Russian Soul”**

**Forms 10-11**

**Teacher’s Worksheet**

**Hall 1. The Central Hall**

**Task 1. Warm-up**

What do you know about the Russian literature of the 19th century, the great authors of the time? What is “War and Peace” about? Use the vocabulary to answer the questions: *biography, novelist, philosopher, moralist, pacifist, aristocratic family, landowner, serf, serfdom, realism, epic novel, historical context, the Napoleonic Wars, the Battle of Borodino, patriotism, courage, fate, destiny, search for meaning, aristocracy, gentry, peasant, uniform, weapon, manuscript, portrait, artifact, exhibit, curator.*

***Suggested answers and commentaries***

The 19th century is often considered the Golden Age of Russian literature, a period that produced some of the most profound and influential writers in the world history. It was a time of immense social and political change in Russia, and these changes deeply influenced the themes and styles of the authors.

When I think of Russian writers of that era, several names immediately come to mind:

1. Leo Tolstoy: he’s one of the greatest novelists of all time. His works like “War and Peace” and “Anna Karenina” are monumental.

“War and Peace” is an epic historical novel set during the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century. It tells us the story of five aristocratic Russian families – the Bezukhovs, the Bolkonskys, the Rostovs, the Kuragins, and the Drubetskoys – and explores their lives, loves, and struggles against the backdrop of war and society change. It’s famous for its vast scope, its philosophical reflections on history, free will, and destiny, and its incredibly detailed character development. It blends historical narrative with domestic realism, focusing on the individual’s experience within grand historic events.

2. Fyodor Dostoevsky: known for his intense psychological novels that explore deep philosophical and religious themes, often focusing on morality, guilt, and the human condition. His major works include “Crime and Punishment”, “The Brothers Karamazov” and “The Idiot”.

3. Alexander Pushkin: often called the Father of Russian literature and the founder of the modern Russian language. He was primarily a poet, famous for works like “Eugene Onegin” (a novel in verse) and narrative poems like “Boris Godunov”. He’s highly revered for his linguistic brilliance and establishing a classical Russian literary tradition.

4. Nikolai Gogol: a master of satirical and grotesque realism, known for works like “Dead Souls” (a satirical novel) and short stories such as “The Overcoat” and “The Nose” which blend humor, absurdity, and profound social commentary.

5. Ivan Turgenev: known for his realistic depictions of the Russian society and the intellectual debates of his time. His novel “Fathers and Sons” is famous for introducing the concept of nihilism and exploring the “generation gap” conflicts.

What makes the 19th-century Russian literature so impactful, in my opinion, is its profound psychological depth, its unflinching examination of moral and philosophical questions, and its intricate portrayal of a society grappling with tradition and modernity, faith and reason. These authors weren’t just telling stories, they were exploring the very nature of humanity and society.

**Task 2. Warm-up**

Work in groups. Look at the sculpture of Leo Tolstoy and study the holographic image in the farther part of the hall. Use the information about the exhibits in the hall to do the task. Explain the meanings of the adjectives *wise, serious, thoughtful, determined, kind, stern*. Use them to give descriptions.

***Suggested answers and commentaries***

*wise* – having or [showing](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/showing) the [ability](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ability) to make good [judgments](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/judgment), [based](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/based) on a [deep](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/deep) [understanding](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/understanding) and [experience](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/experience) of [life](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/life)

*serious* – a serious [person](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/person) is [quiet](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/quiet), [thinks](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/think) [carefully](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/carefully) about things, and does not [laugh](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/laugh) a lot, [determined](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/determined) to [follow](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/follow) a [particular](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/particular) [plan](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/plan) of [action](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/action)

*thoughtful* – carefully considering things

*determined* – wanting to do something very much and not allowing anyone or any difficulties to stop them

*kind* – generous, helpful, and thinking about other people’s feelings

*stern* – severe, or showing disapproval

Group 1 researches for 3-5 key biographical facts about Leo Tolstoy.

***Suggested answers and commentaries***

- Born on September 9, 1828, at the Yasnaya Polyana estate (Tula, Russia); died there on November 20, 1910 – one of the most outstanding Russian writers of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

- Came from an old noble family; received a home education and later studied at Kazan University (his studies were interrupted).

- Participation in the Crimean War (1854–1855) and early life observations formed the basis for his autobiographical and early works; later, his experience of estate life provided material for his portrayals of peasants and landowners.

- Author of the great novels “War and Peace” (1865–1869) and “Anna Karenina” (1873–1877), as well as numerous short stories, novellas, and philosophical treatises; his work combines realism, historical scope, and profound psychological insight.

- In his mature years he underwent a spiritual turning point: he rejected worldly pleasures and church dogma, advocated a Christian pastoral ethic and pacifism; his ideas had a significant influence on later social and religious movements, including non-violent movements.

Group 2: researches for the historic background of the Napoleonic Wars (main events, Napoleon, Kutuzov).

***Suggested answers and commentaries***

General context and causes:

- After the French Revolution (1789–1799) Europe entered a period of revolutionary and then Napoleonic wars. The old monarchy order clashed with the expansion of French revolutionary ideas and later Napoleon’s imperial ambitions.

- Key causes: revolutionary France’s territorial expansion and ideological challenge to monarchies; competition for European influence and overseas commerce (Britain vs. France); Napoleon’s drive to secure dominance on the continent.

- Time frame commonly given: 1803–1815 (though related conflicts stretch from the 1790s to 1815).

Napoleon Bonaparte - brief profile and aims.

- Born in 1769 (Corsica); rose to prominence in the 1790s as a brilliant general; seized power in the Coup of 18 Brumaire (November, 9), 1799 and became First Consul, then Emperor of the French (1804).

- Military strengths: exceptional operational skill, use of corps system for independent maneuver, concentration of artillery and infantry, rapid marches, and decisive battle doctrine.

- Political/administrative impact: exported the Napoleonic Code, administrative reforms and reorganized states in satellite kingdoms reshaping European institutions.

- Strategic goals: secure French hegemony in Europe, weaken Britain economically (Continental System), and create a network of allied states.

Major campaigns and turning points (chronological highlights)

- Trafalgar (October, 21, 1805): British naval victory under Admiral Nelson; ensured British naval supremacy and prevented invasion of Britain.

- Austerlitz (December, 2, 1805): the Battle of the Three Emperors; Napoleon’s victory over Austrian and Russian armies, led to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire and the Treaty of Pressburg.

- Jena and Auerstedt (1806): defeats of Prussia; French dominance in central Europe.

- Friedland (1807): victory over Russia and the Treaty of Tilsit (1807) temporarily divide Europe into the French and Russian spheres.

- 1808–1814 – the Peninsular War (Spain & Portugal): British intervention under Wellington; costly guerrilla warfare and drain on French resources; long-term strategic weakening of France.

- 1812 – the Invasion of Russia (June–December 1812). Napoleon invaded with a Grande Armée (estimates ~400,000–600,000). Russian strategy of scorched earth and strategic withdrawal, harsh weather, and supply failures devastated the French army.

- Borodino (September, 7, 1812): extremely bloody and tactically indecisive battle, a psychological victory of the Russian army; Napoleon entered Moscow (September), which was largely abandoned and partly burned. The subsequent retreat (October–December) destroyed the Grande Armée.

- 1813–1814 – the Sixth Coalition forms (Russia, Prussia, Austria, Britain, Sweden, others). The Battle of Leipzig (October, 1813, the Battle of Nations): decisive coalition victory; forced French retreat into France.

- 1814 campaign: allied invasion of France; Paris falls; Napoleon abdicates (April 1814) and is exiled to Elba.

- 1815 – Hundred Days and Waterloo (June, 18, 1815): Napoleon escapes Elba, returns to power briefly; at Waterloo he is defeated by Wellington and Blücher. Napoleon is exiled to Saint Helena, where he dies in 1821.

The Russian campaign and its importance.

- The 1812 invasion is widely seen as the turning point of the Napoleonic era: it shattered the invincibility of the Grande Armée and galvanized Europe into the coalitions that defeated Napoleon.

- Massive losses for the French (only a small fraction of the invasion force returned), enormous material and human cost for Russia as well, but strategically Russia preserved its army and state.

Mikhail Illarionovich Kutuzov – profile and role.

- Born 1745, died 1813. A veteran Russian general with long service in Russo‑Ottoman and other wars.

- Appointed commander‑in‑chief of the Russian armies in August/September 1812 after public and political pressure (replacing Barclay de Tolly).

Strategic approach in 1812:

- Favored preservation of the army over seeking a decisive battle when circumstances were unfavorable.

- Implemented and continued the strategic retreat and scorched‑earth measures that deprived the French of supplies.

- At Borodino (September, 7, 1812) he allowed a battle that inflicted very heavy casualties on both sides but preserved the core of the Russian army.

- Ordered the abandonment of Moscow to avoid encirclement and preserve forces – a controversial but strategic decision that ultimately helped cripple Napoleon’s campaign.

- Legacy: credited with the pragmatic strategy that saved Russia’s armed strength and helped bring about the collapse of the Grande Armée; died in April 1813, before the final defeats of Napoleon in 1814–1815.

Consequences and significance.

- Geopolitical: collapse of Napoleonic hegemony; restoration of many monarchies at the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815); establishment of a diplomatic order seeking balance of power in Europe.

- Social and legal: spread of Napoleonic reforms (legal codes, administrative changes) across much of Europe.

- Intellectual/political: stimulated nationalist movements and reshaped European political consciousness.

Group 3: finds out about the main characters of “War and Peace”, their personalities and roles. What episodes from “War and Peace” are represented in the holographic exposition? Put the episodes in the order they follow in the novel.

Write down more adjectives to describe the characters from ‘War and Peace’.

***Suggested answers and commentaries***

Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” is a sprawling epic with a vast cast of characters. However, some stand out as central figures, driving the narrative and embodying key themes. Here’s a breakdown of the main characters, their personalities, and roles:

1. Pierre Bezukhov:

•  Personality: Pierre is an intellectual, idealistic, and often naive young man. He’s characterized by his search for meaning in life, his tendency to be easily influenced, and his genuine desire to do good. He’s awkward, physically large, and prone to social gaffes, but he’s also incredibly kind and generous. He’s constantly questioning his beliefs and searching for answers in religion, freemasonry, and ultimately, through his experiences with ordinary people.

•  Role: Pierre represents the intellectual and spiritual journey of self-discovery. He embodies the search for meaning in a world consumed by war and social inequality. His trajectory takes him from immense wealth and disillusionment to imprisonment and profound personal transformation. He represents Tolstoy’s ideas about simplicity, empathy, and the importance of living in accordance with one’s conscience. His eventual embrace of a simple, family-oriented life mirrors Tolstoy’s own evolving philosophy. He represents the possibility of positive social change through individual action.

2. Andrei Bolkonsky:

•  Personality: Andrei is intelligent, ambitious, proud, and initially disillusioned with society. He seeks glory and purpose through military service. He’s critical and emotionally reserved. He yearns for a grand, meaningful existence beyond the trivialities of aristocratic life. He's a brilliant strategist and deeply admired by his subordinates. He can be seen as cold and detached, but he is also capable of profound love and intellectual curiosity.

•  Role: Andrei represents the pursuit of glory and the disillusionment of war. His experiences on the battlefield and his personal tragedies lead him to question the values he once held dear. He embodies the aristocratic class’s struggles with duty, ambition, and finding purpose. His death serves as a stark reminder of the futility and senselessness of war and underscores the importance of human connection. His character explores the tension between intellectual ambition and emotional fulfillment.

3. Natasha Rostova:

•  Personality: Natasha is vivacious, impulsive, passionate, and full of life. She’s characterized by her deep empathy, her natural instincts, and her genuine emotions. She’s initially naive and romantic, but experiences significant personal growth through love, loss, and hardship. She is the embodiment of life, love, and family.

•  Role: Natasha represents the life force, the importance of family, and the connection to nature. She embodies the natural, unpretentious spirit that Tolstoy admires. Her journey from a frivolous young girl to a devoted wife and mother illustrates the transformative power of love and experience. She is the emotional center of the Rostov family and the heart of the novel. She represents the beauty and strength found in ordinary life. Her actions, driven by instinct and compassion, often demonstrate a wisdom that surpasses intellectual understanding.

4. Nikolai Rostov:

•  Personality: Nikolai is brave, honorable, and straightforward, but also somewhat narrow-minded and conventional. He’s a loyal soldier and deeply devoted to his family. He initially prioritizes honor and duty over introspection. He can be pragmatic and sometimes struggles with emotional depth. He’s a good, honest man, but lacks the intellectual and spiritual complexities of Pierre and Andrei.

•  Role: Nikolai represents the traditional values of honor, duty, and family. He embodies the solid, grounded nature of the Russian aristocracy. His experiences in the army and his subsequent management of the family estate demonstrate the practical concerns and responsibilities of his social class. His character highlights the importance of stability and tradition within a society undergoing profound change. He provides a contrast to the more intellectually driven characters, grounding the narrative in the realities of everyday life.

Supporting characters and their significance:

•  Hélène Kuragina: a beautiful and manipulative social climber. She represents the superficiality and moral corruption of the upper classes. Her marriage to Pierre is a disaster, highlighting his naivete and lack of judgment.

•  Anatole Kuragin: Hélène's brother, a charming but reckless and amoral seducer. He nearly ruins Natasha’s life, demonstrating the destructive power of unchecked passion and selfishness.

•  Sonya: Natasha’s cousin, a kind and self-sacrificing but ultimately passive character. She represents the limitations placed on women in that society and the dangers of suppressing one’s own desires.

•  Princess Marya Bolkonskaya: Andrei’s sister, a deeply religious and compassionate woman who suffers greatly under her father’s hard character. She embodies the power of faith and the importance of empathy. She finds happiness in marriage and motherhood, representing a more traditional path to fulfillment.

•  Old Prince Nikolai Bolkonsky: Andrei’s father, a stern, autocratic, and intellectually brilliant but emotionally stunted man. He represents the rigid values of the old aristocracy and the limitations of a purely rational worldview.

Overall, “War and Peace” uses these diverse characters to explore profound themes:

•  The meaning of life: the characters grapple with questions of purpose, faith, love, and happiness amidst the chaos of war and social upheaval.

•  The nature of war: Tolstoy depicts war as a brutal and senseless event that disrupts individual lives and exposes the futility of human ambition.

•  The role of fate and free will: the characters’ lives are shaped by both historical forces beyond their control and individual choices.

•  The importance of family and human connection: Tolstoy emphasizes the enduring value of relationships and the power of love to heal and transform.

•  Social inequality and the search for justice: the novel critiques the vast disparities of wealth and power in Russian society and explores the possibility of creating a more just and equitable world.

The characters aren’t simply fictional figures; they are representations of different aspects of human nature and reflections of the profound questions that Tolstoy sought to answer through his writing.

**Task 3. Reading/Discussion**

Read the statements, mark them fact (F) or opinion (O), explain why.

Leo Tolstoy came from an aristocratic family but dedicated much of his life to helping ordinary people and questioning social norms.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fact or opinion?** | |
| **Statement** | **Explanation** |
| Tolstoy was a wealthy landowner. | Fact |
| He believed in living a simple life. | Opinion / fact based on actions |
| He was a pacifist. | Fact |
| His ideas are still relevant today. | Opinion |

**Hall 2. Peace, Hall 3. War**

Leo Tolstoy spent years researching this period, reading memoirs, visiting battlefields. He wanted to show not just the ‘big history’ but also the human experience of war, the Russian soul. Learn the information on historical context (look at maps, military uniforms, weapons, battle panoramas).

**Task 4. Speaking**

Answer the questions: What was the significance of the Battle of Borodino? Who were the key military leaders involved on both sides? List 3 key historical events or figures from this period shown in the exhibits.

***Suggested answer:*** See the information above.

What feelings and emotions do these exhibits (uniforms, weapons) evoke in you? How do you think ordinary people felt during these wars? (Vocabulary reminder: *fear, courage, patriotism, suffering, hope, despair*)

**Task 5. Character Match & Description (Reading/Discussion)**

Here you can see illustrations from “War and Peace”, descriptions of its main characters, and objects that recreate the aristocratic life of the time. These are the worlds of the Rostovs, the Bolkonskys, and the Bezukhovs.

Students find short descriptions of Pierre, Natasha, and Andrei in the exhibit texts.

  •  Which character do you find most interesting and why? How do their personal journeys reflect the themes of the novel (love, search for meaning, destiny)?

  •  Worksheet Task: Choose one character from “War and Peace” and describe their personality in 2-3 sentences.

***Suggested answer and commentaries:*** See the information above.

Below is an account of how Leo Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” constructs and explores the idea commonly called “**the Russian soul” –** a cluster of moral, spiritual and social qualities that Tolstoy both admires and interrogates.

“The Russian soul” in the novel:

- A moral depth grounded in humility, suffering, patience and spiritual intuition rather than cold rationalism.

- A collective, relational sense of identity: family, community and peasantry matter more than individual self‑assertion.

- Religious feeling rooted in Orthodox Christianity and folk belief – ritual, resignation, forgiveness, and an acceptance of life’s mystery.

- An affinity with nature, simplicity and the ordinary rhythms of domestic and rural life.

- A moral honesty – warmth, impulsiveness, heartfelt pity and hospitality.

How Leo Tolstoy gives that idea form (techniques and motifs).

- Contrast: Tolstoy often opposes the westernizing, calculative mind (Napoleon, social climbers, speculative philosophizing) with characters or scenes showing intuitive moral life.

- Panorama and micro-scenes: sweeping military and historical canvases alternate with intimate domestic episodes and peasant vignettes; the latter are where the “soul” is shown in practice.

- Authorial reflection: Tolstoy interrupts the plot to philosophize about history, free will and morality – often privileging organic, lived moral sense over abstract theories.

- Simple wisdom and folk voice: songs, prayers, proverbs and the behavior of peasants and simple folk function as a moral counterpoint to aristocratic affectation.

Key characters and episodes that embody “the Russian soul”.

- Pierre Bezukhov: his spiritual searching culminates in a transformed, practical humility. The transformative captivity episodes and his relation to Platon Karataev (a figure Tolstoy uses like a moral archetype) show the value of simple, unpretentious goodness: acceptance, patience, and humane solidarity.

- Natasha Rostova: instinctive, emotional, quick to love and to feel remorse – Natasha represents the life‑affirming, heartfelt side of the Russian character. Her recovery and maturation emphasize renewal through family, repentance and domestic love.

- Princess Marya: devout, self‑sacrificing and inwardly strong – she shows piety, moral endurance and the redemptive power of compassion.

- The Rostov household and peasant scenes: conviviality, mutual help, music, and ritual illustrate communal life as the source of moral meaning.

- Prince Kutuzov and the Russian command culture: Kutuzov’s humility, patience and reliance on instinct and the people contrast with Western military rationalism – Tolstoy uses him to exemplify national wisdom in crisis.

Tolstoy’s ambivalence and critique.

- Not an uncritical glorification: Tolstoy exposes weaknesses – passivity, superstition, impulsiveness and social inertia can be harmful. Natasha’s youthful folly, aristocratic complacency, and some patriarchal excesses are criticized.

- Not simple nationalism: “the Russian soul” in “War and Peace” is ethical and existential, not merely patriotic rhetoric. Tolstoy values the moral capacities he finds in ordinary Russians as a model for humane living, but he places those capacities within a Christian‑ethical and universalist frame.

- Tension with history: Tolstoy argues that history is not made by great men alone; the “soul” of a people shows up in mass life and small acts, but history’s violence also reveals limits and suffering.

Historic and intellectual context.

- The novel was written amid debates between Westernizers (rational, Europeanizing reform) and Slavophiles (value of Russian traditions and Orthodoxy). Tolstoy draws selectively from the Slavophile admiration of peasant morality, while criticizing aristocratic hypocrisy.

- The Napoleonic wars provide the backdrop; the contrast with Western power and reason helps Tolstoy dramatize Russian moral characteristics.

In “War and Peace” “the Russian soul” is not a single static essence but a cluster of moral dispositions – humility, patient endurance, heartfelt compassion, communal life and spiritual intuition – that Tolstoy both admires and probes critically. He presents it as a source of moral strength and humane wisdom, while acknowledging its flaws and limits, and ultimately situates it as one expression of a universal search for meaning in human life.

**Task 6. Quote Analysis (Group work/Discussion)**

Leo Tolstoy explored many profound themes: the nature of war and peace, the search for truth, the role of the individual in history, love, family, and faith.

Comment on the quotes. Answer the questions:

* What does the quote mean to you?
* How does it relate to Tolstoy's ideas and the novel's themes?

Example Quotes:

* “There is no greatness where there is no simplicity, goodness, and truth”.   
  (L. Tolstoy)
* “If everyone fought only for his own convictions, there would be no war”. (Andrei Bolkonsky)
* “Life is everything. Life is God. Everything changes and moves and that movement is God. And while there is life, there is joy in the consciousness of the divine”. (Pierre Bezukhov)

***Suggested answer and commentaries:*** See the information above.

**Task 7. Consolidation & Reflection**

Answer the questions:

What was the most surprising or interesting thing you learned today about Tolstoy, “War and Peace“, or the historical period?

 How has this museum visit changed or deepened your understanding of Russian literature, history and “the Russian soul”?

If Leo Tolstoy were alive today, what do you think he would say about our modern world, about current conflicts, or about people’s search for happiness?

Write down one new word or phrase you learned today and explain its meaning.

***Suggested answer and commentaries:*** See the information above.