



[Crime and Punishment](#), by Fyodor Dostoevsky

In A Nutshell

Fyodor Dostoevsky first published *Crime and Punishment* in 1866 in twelve monthly installments in a conservative journal, *Russian Messenger* (*Russki Vestnik*). The novel has always been popular, though reactions to it can fall just about anywhere along the spectrum of love and hate.

Crime and Punishment (like most Dostoevsky stories) is incredibly fluid and is open to a wide variety of interpretations by readers. As Simon Karlinsky suggests in his essay "Dostoevsky as Rorschach Test," how we interpret *Crime and Punishment* might be a reflection of our own psychology (source).

Dostoevsky was a brilliant fiction writer, a journalist, and a publisher. He also had a gambling problem, suffered from epilepsy, and had constant financial problems. Like the hero of our novel, he spent time in prison in Siberia. He wasn't imprisoned for murder, though, but for being a member of the Petrashevsky Circle (source).

Dostoevsky was under tremendous time and money pressure when he was writing *Crime and Punishment*. We know from his letters (excerpts from which are translated by George Gibian in the fabulous *Norton Third Edition*) that, in addition to having to produce the monthly *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky installment, he had to come up with another novel for another publisher.

Visit Shmoop for full coverage of [Crime and Punishment](#)
Shmoop: [study guides](#) and [teaching resources](#) for [literature](#), [US history](#), and [poetry](#)



Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0

This document may be modified and republished for noncommercial use only.
You must attribute Shmoop and link to <http://www.shmoop.com>.

He had borrowed money from a fellow named Stellovsky, in exchange for writing a novel. If he didn't give Stellovsky this other book by November 1, 1866, Stellovsky would own the rights to all of Dostoevsky's work for the next ten years! So Dostoevsky set out to do the impossible – write two novels at the same time, one in the morning, one at night. He was terribly depressed about it, but he did it. He handed Stellovsky *The Gambler* right on schedule, and *Russian Messenger* got what you see before you, except in Russian.

Visit Shmoop for much more analysis:

- [Crime and Punishment Themes](#)
- [Crime and Punishment Quotes](#)
- [Crime and Punishment Summary](#)
- Also: literary devices, characters, trivia, audio, photos, links, and more

Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 Fyodor Dostoevsky adored Nikolai Gogol, a writer well known for his "laugh out loud" but bleak humor. Does *Crime and Punishment* make you laugh? What parts, if any, are funny, and why? If you didn't find *any* parts of this book funny, why do you suppose that is?
- 2 We use Raskolnikov as the hero in our "Booker's Seven Plots Analysis." Would this "rebirth" formula still work if we applied it to other characters?
- 3 What does the novel say about the different roles men and women played in Russia in the 1860s? How are their pressures different? How are they similar?

Visit Shmoop for many more [Crime and Punishment Study Questions](#)

Visit Shmoop for full coverage of [Crime and Punishment](#)
Shmoop: study guides and teaching resources for literature, US history, and poetry



Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0

This document may be modified and republished for noncommercial use only.
You must attribute Shmoop and link to <http://www.shmoop.com>.