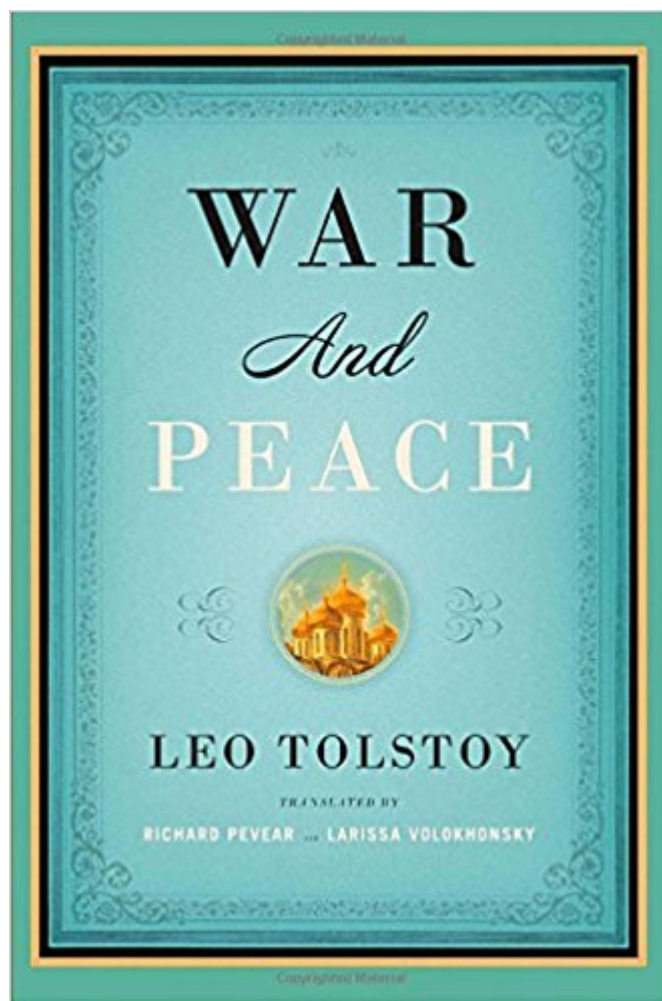


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# War And Peace (Vintage Classics)



## Synopsis

From the award-winning translators of *Anna Karenina* and *The Brothers Karamazov* comes this magnificent new translation of Tolstoy's masterwork. *War and Peace* broadly focuses on Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 and follows three of the most well-known characters in literature: Pierre Bezukhov, the illegitimate son of a count who is fighting for his inheritance and yearning for spiritual fulfillment; Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, who leaves his family behind to fight in the war against Napoleon; and Natasha Rostov, the beautiful young daughter of a nobleman who intrigues both men. As Napoleon's army invades, Tolstoy brilliantly follows characters from diverse backgrounds—peasants and nobility, civilians and soldiers—as they struggle with the problems unique to their era, their history, and their culture. And as the novel progresses, these characters transcend their specificity, becoming some of the most moving and human figures in world literature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Shimmering. . . . [It] offers an opportunity to see this great classic afresh, to approach it not as a monument but rather as a deeply touching story about our contradictory human hearts."—Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post Book World*  
"A major new translation . . . [which] brings us the palpability [of Tolstoy's characters] as perhaps never before. . . . Pevear and Volokhonsky's new translation gives us new access to the spirit and order of the book."—James Wood, *The New Yorker*  
"Excellent. . . . An extraordinary

achievement. . . . Wonderfully fresh and readable. . . . The English-speaking world is indebted to these two magnificent translators for revealing more of its hidden riches than any who have tried to translated the book before."• Orlando Figes, The New York Review of Books"• Tolstoy's War and Peace has often been put in a league with Homer's epic poems; it seems to me that the same might be said for Pevear and Volokhonsky's translation of his great novel. . . . Their efforts convey a much closer equivalent in English to the experience of reading the original."• Michael Katz, New England Review• Full review here:  
<http://www.nereview.com/29-4/29-4Katz.htm>

Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) was born in central Russia. After serving in the Crimean War, he retired to his estate and devoted himself to writing, farming, and raising his large family. His novels and outspoken social polemics brought him world fame. Richard Pevear has published translations of Alain, Yves Bonnefoy, Alberto Savinio, Pavel Florensky, and Henri Volokhonsky, as well as two books of poetry. He has received fellowships or grants for translation from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the French Ministry of Culture. Larissa Volokhonsky was born in Leningrad. She has translated works by the prominent Orthodox theologians Alexander Schmemmann and John Meyendorff into Russian. Together, Pevear and Volokhonsky have translated *Dead Souls* and *The Collected Stories* by Nikolai Gogol, *The Complete Short Novels* of Chekhov, and *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Notes from Underground*, *Demons*, *The Idiot*, and *The Adolescent* by Fyodor Dostoevsky. They were twice awarded the PEN Book-of-the-Month Club Translation Prize (for their version of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* and for Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*), and their translation of Dostoevsky's *Demons* was one of three nominees for the same prize. They are married and live in France.

I have, at various times, tried to read four different editions of *War & Peace* (Penguin, Signet, Barnes & Noble, and now this) and by far, this is the best edition I've seen. This edition is everything I was looking for in a copy of *War & Peace* and I cannot recommend it highly enough. Pros: It is highly readable. Translating texts is always difficult, because you want to retain the feel of reading a Nineteenth century work but use language that makes the work accessible. Personally, I found some editions (Barnes & Noble, Penguin) to be hard to read and comprehend, especially when you first begin. This edition is a relative breeze to read. It has French translations. When reading the Signet edition, I found myself using google translate to understand sentences or phrases left in the

book in French. Other editions translated most of the French but left phrases here and there untranslated and in the text, without footnotes. I understand in the original, Tolstoy wrote entire passages in French but provided translations in the foot notes. This edition follows that pattern. There are entire passages in French, but they are translated in the footnotes on the page. It has historical end-notes and an index. I am not unfamiliar with European and Russian history, but I, like most people, have no more knowledge than what I learned in my freshman world history class. This work has end notes in the text to provide context. Though it slows me down, I find myself flipping to the back of the book and reading every end note when the text provides it. I cannot stress enough how helpful this has been. The index is likewise helpful. It is an alphabetical list and short biography of the historical characters and places mentioned in War and Peace. It includes a short chapter summary. At the very end of the book, there is a chapter summary for a collection of chapters sharing a theme or describing the same event. The summary is no more than a sentence long and provides a nice refresher when you are trying to recall what happened when. Cons: Compared to editions that translate all the French, reading in the footnotes can be burdensome. I personally don't mind, but I can see how that might trip some people up. If you are looking for a copy of War and Peace, this is the one to get. Trust me.

Approaching War and Peace feels like a monumental task. Sitting down and reading it is not for the faint of heart. The story is engrossing and will consume you. It took me about four weeks to finish it because it's not the kind of book that one can read straight through. One puts it down to think about it, coming back after one has digested what has one read. Set against the backdrop of Napoleonic Europe, the story follows three main Russian families as they navigate the early years of the nineteenth century. Plot? Is there one? Perhaps. Perhaps not. The background history of the Napoleon Wars are what set in motion a lot of the action, especially for the male protagonists who fight in the wars. For the females it seems that love and falling in love and out of love and the passage to adulthood are what drives their stories. Our main protagonist is Pierre Bezukhov, a mirror for Tolstoy himself. The ideas Bezukhov spouts are usually the ideas Tolstoy believes in and wants you to believe in too. Pierre is the illegitimate son of a rich aristocrat. The other families are the Bolkonskys and the Rostovs. The Bolkonskys are right and proper with an autocratic father from one of the lower levels of Hell. The Rostovs are more homely and not so rich but full of love. There are also a couple of other families that play parts such as the Kuragins, who play the part of the somewhat "evil" characters. The cast of characters is indeed large as many say. But honestly the main characters that the book follows number about 5 to 10. So it's manageable. Aside from Pierre

Bezukhov, there is Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, Princess Marya Bolkonskaya, Countess Natalya Rostova, Count Nicholas Rostov, and Helene Kuragina. The rest of the characters are secondary and even Helene is not that important. The book itself is hard to describe. Is it a novel? Tolstoy didn't think so. Is it history? Though there are huge stretches on the philosophy of history, this is not a history book. Nor is it philosophy. At least not necessarily good philosophy. It is something unique. Perhaps that is why *War and Peace* has attained the status of classic. It is a book that attempts to give one a complete (at least complete aristocratic) view of Russian society between the years 1805 and 1812. Perhaps the German word, 'Gesamtkunstwerk' - total work of art - should be applied to literature. I read the eBook Pevear-Volokhonsky translation that goes for \$12.99. It was a good translation that captured the spirit of the times. The notes and translations of the French were all hyperlinked which made things easy enough to read and follow. Though I would rather have seen the notes on the bottom of each page rather than the end of each book. Having finished *War and Peace*, I am glad that I read it. Though I am still not quite certain if it should be regarded as such as a classic. Is it truly that great? I'm still not sure.

OK *War and Peace* that venerable tome. I have always wanted to read this book, tried it a couple times, it does start off a tad slow. But the physical book is 1225 pages long and I just could not deal with a book that large - ever. But in 2016, KINDLE - the biggest book is still the exact same size as the Kindle, so I took it on. This book is an interesting mixture of fiction, history, the author's philosophical thoughts on War and peace. It starts a little slow as you get used to the various characters and gain an understanding of how society operated in Russia at the time. It was fascinating to learn a different side of the War of 1812 and to learn about Alexander I and Napoleon Bonaparte. It was very interesting to have Tolstoy expose the effects of war on various elements of society, the fighting man, the peasants, the society folks, the officers, the Royalty. I found it very thoughtful and informative. I might wish he had woven in a little more "peace" but it was still interestingly done. Plus I can say I read *War and Peace* - which was on my bucket list of things to do.

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