

Crime and Punishment

by Feodor Dostoyevsky, 1866

WORK AND AUTHOR

Crime and Punishment:

1. Published in 1866.
2. Explores the extraordinary man theory.
3. A study of the man's inner feelings and the workings of the mind.

Feodor Dostoyevsky:

1. A novelist who focused on murder.
2. A Russian patriot who loved his country.
3. He believed that suffering was necessary to purify man's soul.
4. Considered one of Russia's greatest writers when he died.

THEME AND CONTENTS

1. Set in Russia, this work deals with a young man's belief that he is extraordinary and therefore beyond the laws of society.
2. It focuses on:
 - Split personality.
 - Insanity.
 - Guilt.
 - Brutal murder.
 - Confession.

MAIN CHARACTERS

1. Raskolnikov, an impoverished student with a split personality who believes that extraordinary men, like himself, have the right to commit any crime, even murder.
2. Dounia, Raskolnikov's sister.
3. Sonia, a girl forced into prostitution by her father's drinking.
4. Svidrigailov, Dounia's former employer who follows her to St. Petersburg and tries to seduce her.
5. Luzhin, betrothed to Dounia but opposed by Raskolnikov.
6. Razumihin, Raskolnikov's best friend.
7. Porfiry, the investigator in charge of the crime.

STORY

1. Raskolnikov, believing he is an extraordinary man, kills an old pawnbroker and her sister.
2. He falls ill and is nursed back to health by his friend Razumihin.
3. Luzhin asks Raskolnikov for Dounia's hand in marriage and is sent away.
4. Svidrigailov arrives and begins pursuing Dounia.

5. Raskolnikov, eaten up by guilt, thinks of confessing his crime many times.
6. Finally, he confesses to Sonia, the prostitute who is a close friend.
7. Svidrigailov overhears the confession and tries to blackmail Dounia into sleeping with him.
8. Dounia refuses and Svidrigailov kills himself.
9. Knowing that Porfiry is convinced of his guilt, Raskolnikov fully confesses the murders and is sentenced to eight years in Siberia.
10. Sonia follows Raskolnikov and promises to wait for him.

LASTING IMPACT

1. Dostoyevsky's main point is that no man has any rights over another and certainly not the right to murder.
2. Raskolnikov paid for his crime through illness and pain brought on by his guilt before he was arrested.
3. Svidrigailov is the "Nietzsche superman" who recognizes no will other than his own. He can rape or abuse without fear of the authorities. He is punished by being isolated from society and hated by all.
4. This book is a study of men who put themselves beyond the rules of society and pay a heavy price for their violations of human decency.