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# Resurrection (Classics)



PENGUIN CLASSICS

LEO TOLSTOY  
*Resurrection*



## Synopsis

Serving on a jury at the trial of a prostitute arrested for murder, Prince Nekhlyudov is horrified to discover that the accused is a woman he had once loved, seduced and then abandoned when she was a young servant girl. Racked with guilt at realizing he was the cause of her ruin, he determines to appeal for her release or give up his own way of life and follow her. Conceived on an epic scale, Resurrection portrays a vast panorama of Russian life, taking us from the underworld of prison cells and warders to the palaces of countesses. It is also an angry denunciation of government, the upper classes, the judicial system and the Church, and a highly personal statement of Tolstoy's belief in human redemption.

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## Customer Reviews

In 'Resurrection', Tolstoy states that "people live and act partly according to their own ideas, and partly because they are influenced by the ideas of others. The extent to which they do the one or the other is one of the chief things that differentiate men."Nekhlyudov, the protagonist of the novel, acted according to the influence of others, ten years prior to the setting of the novel. Scheduled to

join the Russian army shortly, he believes himself entitled to a life of squander and debauchery, of loose morals, and even looser sense of responsibility, according to his pledge of his life to the cause of the army. If he is willing, and very likely, to die for his country, then the country owes him. Such was the sense of entitlement common in the mind of Russian men at the time. Following this belief, Nekhlyudov finds himself seducing young Katusha, and bedding her, on the eve of his departure. He abandons Katusha after succumbing to the lust he feels for her, and leaves her to whatever life brings, without a second thought. Ten years later, Nekhlyudov has that second thought, when he and Katusha are reunited, on opposite sides of the law. Katusha stands accused of robbing and poisoning a 'client,' as her life has led her to prostitution. Nekhlyudov sits on the jury that will decide her fate.

Resurrection (1899) is the last of Tolstoy's great novels and unlike the previous War and Peace and Anna Karenina the architectural lines are fairly unique. Whereas in the previous novels attention is continually shifted from one hero to another, in Resurrection Tolstoy follows Dimitri Nekhlyudov step by step, drilling to the core of his thoughts, commenting on his actions, analyzing his motives, evincing his engendered acts, and verbalizing the purging of his soul that inexorably manifests into a non-Christian regeneration process. Tolstoy hardly lets Nekhlyudov out of sight for an instant: his conscience continually demands of him to atone for his sin. Interwoven with the flow of the story is Nekhlyudov's painful realization of the demoralization that develops into such perfect madness of selfishness. If it had not been for the Doukhobors, who was accused of fighting against the spirit of God by the Orthodox Church, Tolstoy might never have finished the novel, the idea for which had been suggested to him ten years previously in order to raise fund for the sect. A nobleman, namely, Dimitri Nekhlyudov, serves on a jury and recognizes the prostitute on trial for theft and poisoning a merchant as a girl he had seduced and loved when he was a young man. Katusha (Maslova), who is a yellow-card prostitute sanctioned by the government, has a checkered fate. She is wrongfully convicted as the jury inadvertently left out the phrase "no intent to take life" in the verdict. She is found not guilty in the theft but guilty of administering a powder and is sentenced to hard labor in the outlandish Siberia.

When the prostitute Maslova stands accused of murder, Prince Nekhlyudov must serve on the jury at her trial. He recognizes Maslova as the innocent young girl he, himself, once loved, seduced and then, cruelly abandoned. What follows is a mature panorama of Russian life, shot through with spiritual intensity. The chief themes of Resurrection are the basic themes inherent in all art: love,

passion and death, but Tolstoy treats them with such a burning sincerity and unique vitality that they seem almost as fresh and pure as newly fallen snow. Resurrection is the great imaginative synthesis of Tolstoyism, ripe with the fruits of a lifetime of agony and questioning. In Resurrection, Tolstoy takes aim at the underworld of nineteenth-century Russian life: the legal and penal systems and, above all, the Church. In the central figure of Nekhlyudov, Tolstoy has created the last of his great self-portraits. In Nekhlyudov he expresses his own deepest aspirations, his own views on every aspect of human existence. The theme of this book is not new to Tolstoy. The fallen man and his decidedly non-Christian process of regeneration has been explored by this author before, but this time he presents it in an entirely different perspective. In Resurrection, Tolstoy sets out to produce the artistic rendition of the resurrection of a fallen man. Since he, himself, does not recognize the Christian concept of resurrection, it is Nekhlyudov's regeneration that he describes instead. Nekhlyudov's life, however, had been one long regeneration after another. Inherited wealth has enabled him to change one lifestyle for another the minute one set of ideals was supplanted by another.

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