



War and Peace (Penguin Classics)

By Leo Tolstoy

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Antony's Brigg's acclaimed translation of Tolstoy's great Russian epic, soon to be a miniseries on A&E, The History Channel, and Lifetime starring Lily James (*Downton Abbey*), Paul Dano (*There Will Be Blood*), and James Norton (*Grantchester*)

Set against the sweeping panoply of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, *War and Peace*—presented here in the first new English translation in forty years—is often considered the greatest novel ever written. At its center are Pierre Bezukhov, searching for meaning in his life; cynical Prince Andrei, ennobled by wartime suffering; and Natasha Rostov, whose impulsiveness threatens to destroy her happiness. As Tolstoy follows the changing fortunes of his characters, he crafts a view of humanity that is both epic and intimate and that continues to define fiction at its most resplendent.

This edition includes an introduction, note on the translation, cast of characters, maps, notes on the major battles depicted, and chapter summaries.

Praise for Antony Brigg's translation of *War and Peace*:

"The best translation so far of Tolstoy's masterpiece into English."
-Robert A. Maguire, professor emeritus of Russian studies, Columbia University

"In Tolstoy's work part of the translator's difficulty lies in conveying not only the simplicity but the subtlety of the book's scale and effect. . . . Briggs has rendered both with a particular exactness and a vigorous precision not to be found, I think, in any previous translation."
-John Bayley, author of *Elegy for Iris*

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Editorial Review

Review

“There remains the greatest of all novelists—for what else can we call the author of *War and Peace*?”

—**Virginia Woolf**

About the Author

Count Leo Tolstoy was born on September 9, 1828, in Yasnaya Polyana, Russia. Orphaned at nine, he was brought up by an elderly aunt and educated by French tutors until he matriculated at Kazan University in 1844. In 1847, he gave up his studies and, after several aimless years, volunteered for military duty in the army, serving as a junior officer in the Crimean War before retiring in 1857. In 1862, Tolstoy married Sophie Behrs, a marriage that was to become, for him, bitterly unhappy. His diary, started in 1847, was used for self-study and self-criticism; it served as the source from which he drew much of the material that appeared not only in his great novels *War and Peace* (1869) and *Anna Karenina* (1877), but also in his shorter works. Seeking religious justification for his life, Tolstoy evolved a new Christianity based upon his own interpretation of the Gospels. Yasnaya Polyana became a mecca for his many converts. At the age of eighty-two, while away from home, the writer suffered a break down in his health in Astapovo, Riazan, and he died there on November 20, 1910.

Anthony Briggs has written, translated, or edited twenty books in the fields of Russian and English literature.

Orlando Figs is the prizewinning author of **A People’s Tragedy** and **Natasha’s Dance**. He is a regular contributor to **The New York Times**, **The Washington Post**, and **The New York Review of Books**.

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An extract from **War and Peace** by **Leo Tolstoy**

During the interval there was a cool draught in H el ene’s box as the door opened and in walked Anatole, stopping and trying not to brush against anyone.

‘Allow me to introduce my brother,’ said H el ene, her eyes shifting uneasily from Natasha to Anatole. Natasha turned her pretty little head towards the handsome adjutant and smiled at him over her bare shoulder. Anatole, who was just as handsome close to as he had been from a distance, sat down beside her and said this was a delight he had long been waiting for, ever since the Naryshkins’ ball, where he had had the unforgettable pleasure of seeing her. Kuragin was much more astute and straightforward with women than he ever was in male company. He talked with an easy directness, and Natasha was agreeably surprised to discover that this man, the butt of so much gossip, had nothing formidable about him – quite the reverse, his face wore the most innocent, cheery and open-hearted of smiles.

Kuragin asked what she thought of the opera, and told her that at the last performance Semyonova had fallen down on stage.

‘Oh, by the way, Countess,’ he said, suddenly treating her like a close friend of long standing, ‘we’re getting up a fancy-dress ball. You must come – it’s going to be great fun. They’re all getting together at the Arkharovs’. Please come. You will, won’t you?’ As he spoke he never took his smiling eyes off Natasha, her face, her neck, her exposed arms. Natasha knew for certain he was besotted with her. She liked this, yet she could feel the temperature rising and she was beginning to feel somehow cornered and constrained in his presence. When she wasn’t looking at him she could sense him gazing at her shoulders, and she found

herself trying to catch his eye to make him look at her face. But when she looked into his eyes she was shocked to realize that the usual barrier of modesty that existed between her and other men was no longer there between the two of them. It had taken five minutes for her to feel terribly close to this man, and she scarcely knew what was happening to her. Whenever she turned away she bristled at the thought that he might seize her from behind by her bare arm and start kissing her on the neck. They were going on about nothing in particular, yet she felt closer to him than she had ever been to any other man. Natasha kept glancing round at Hélène and her father for help – what did it all mean? – but Hélène was deep in conversation with a general and didn't respond to her glance, and her father's eyes conveyed nothing but their usual message, 'Enjoying yourself? Jolly good. I'm so pleased.'

There was an awkward silence, during which Anatole, the personification of cool determination, never took his voracious eyes off her, and Natasha broke it by asking whether he liked living in Moscow. She coloured up the moment the question was out of her mouth. She couldn't help feeling there was something improper about even talking to him. Anatole smiled an encouraging smile.

'Oh, I didn't like it much at first. Well, what is it that makes a town nice to live in? It's the pretty women, isn't it? Well, now I do like it, very much indeed,' he said, with a meaningful stare. 'You will come to the fancy-dress ball, Countess? Please come,' he said. Putting his hand out to touch her bouquet he lowered his voice and added in French, 'You'll be the prettiest woman there. Do come, dear Countess, and give me this flower as your pledge.'

Natasha didn't understand a word of this – any more than he did – but she felt that behind his incomprehensible words there was some dishonourable intention. Not knowing how to respond, she turned away as if she hadn't heard him. But the moment she turned away she could feel him right behind her, very close.

'Now what? Is he embarrassed? Is he angry? Should I put things right?' she wondered. She couldn't help turning round. She looked him straight in the eyes. One glance at him, standing so close, with all that self-assurance and the warmth of his sweet smile, and she was lost. She stared into his eyes, and her smile was the mirror-image of his. And again she sensed with horror there was no barrier between the two of them.

The curtain rose again. Anatole strolled out of the box, a picture of composure and contentment. Natasha went back to her father's box, completely taken by the new world she found herself in. All that was happening before her eyes now seemed absolutely normal. By contrast, all previous thoughts of her fiancé, Princess Marya, her life in the country, never even crossed her mind. It was as if it all belonged to the distant past.

Users Review

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