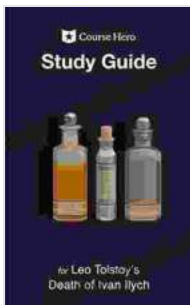


Study Guide: Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych*

Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* is a novella that explores the themes of morality, mortality, and the meaning of life. The novella follows the life of Ivan Ilych, a successful judge who is diagnosed with a terminal illness. As Ivan grapples with his impending death, he undergoes a profound transformation that challenges his former beliefs and leads him to a new understanding of life and death.



Study Guide for Leo Tolstoy's *Death of Ivan Ilych*

(Course Hero Study Guides) by Sally Warner

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 1149 KB
Print length : 38 pages
Lending : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Paperback : 108 pages
Item Weight : 7.7 ounces
Dimensions : 6 x 0.25 x 9 inches



This study guide will provide a comprehensive overview of *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, including detailed character analysis, plot summary, themes, and more. This guide is designed to help students understand the novella's complex themes and appreciate its literary significance.

Character Analysis

Ivan Ilych

Ivan Ilych is the protagonist of the novella. He is a successful judge who is highly respected by his colleagues and friends. However, beneath his veneer of success, Ivan is a deeply unhappy man. He is estranged from his wife and children, and he finds little fulfillment in his work.

When Ivan is diagnosed with a terminal illness, he is forced to confront his own mortality. This confrontation leads him to a profound transformation. He begins to question the values he has held throughout his life and comes to a new understanding of the meaning of life.

Praskovya Fyodorovna

Praskovya Fyodorovna is Ivan Ilych's wife. She is a cold and calculating woman who is more concerned with her own social status than with her husband's well-being.

As Ivan's illness progresses, Praskovya becomes increasingly distant and unsupportive. She refuses to acknowledge the severity of Ivan's condition and does everything she can to maintain the illusion of a normal life.

Gerasim

Gerasim is a young servant who works in Ivan Ilych's household. He is the only character in the novella who shows genuine compassion for Ivan.

When Ivan is bedridden, Gerasim is the one who cares for him. He bathes him, brings him food, and helps him to the toilet. Gerasim's kindness provides Ivan with a glimmer of hope in the midst of his suffering.

Plot Summary

The novella opens with Ivan Ilych's death. The narrator then tells the story of Ivan's life, beginning with his childhood and ending with his final moments.

Ivan is born into a wealthy family and grows up in a world of privilege. He attends the best schools and eventually becomes a successful judge. However, despite his success, Ivan is unhappy. He is estranged from his wife and children, and he finds little fulfillment in his work.

When Ivan is diagnosed with a terminal illness, he is forced to confront his own mortality. This confrontation leads him to a profound transformation. He begins to question the values he has held throughout his life and comes to a new understanding of the meaning of life.

As Ivan's illness progresses, he becomes increasingly isolated and alone. His friends and colleagues abandon him, and his wife and children become increasingly distant. Only Gerasim, the young servant, shows him any genuine compassion.

In the final moments of his life, Ivan comes to a new understanding of life and death. He realizes that the true meaning of life is not found in wealth, status, or power, but in love and compassion.

Themes

The Death of Ivan Ilych explores a number of complex themes, including:

- **Morality:** Tolstoy examines the moral choices that Ivan makes throughout his life. He argues that true morality is not based on

external rules and regulations, but on a deep understanding of love and compassion.

- **Mortality:** Tolstoy explores the human condition of mortality. He argues that death is not something to be feared, but rather something to be embraced. Death is a part of life, and it can teach us a great deal about ourselves and the world around us.
- **The Meaning of Life:** Tolstoy argues that the true meaning of life is found in love and compassion. He suggests that we should seek to live our lives in a way that makes a positive difference in the world, and that we should not be afraid to die when our time comes.

Literary Analysis

The Death of Ivan Ilych is a masterfully written novella that uses a variety of literary devices to create a powerful and moving narrative. Some of the most notable literary devices used in the novella include:

- **Foreshadowing:** Tolstoy uses foreshadowing to hint at Ivan Ilych's impending death throughout the novella. For example, Ivan's description of his childhood illness as a "near-death experience" foreshadows his own death later in the novella.
- **Symbolism:** The novella is rich in symbolism. For example, Ivan's illness can be seen as a symbol of the moral decay that has taken hold of his life. Similarly, Gerasim's kindness can be seen as a symbol of the love and compassion that can be found even in the most difficult of circumstances.
- **Irony:** The novella is full of irony. For example, it is ironic that Ivan Ilych, who has spent his life pursuing wealth and status, dies a poor

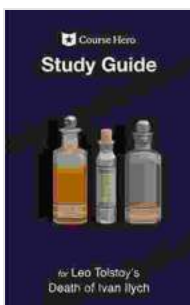
and lonely man. It is also ironic that Gerasim, the young servant who is seen as a social inferior, is the one who shows Ivan the true meaning of life.

The Death of Ivan Ilych is a powerful and moving meditation on morality, mortality, and the meaning of life. The novella explores these complex themes through a compelling narrative that is rich in symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony.

This study guide has provided a comprehensive overview of *The Death of Ivan Ilych*, including detailed character analysis, plot summary, themes, and literary analysis. This guide is designed to help students understand the novella's complex themes and appreciate its literary significance.

Additional Resources

- Course Hero Study Guide: The Death of Ivan Ilych
- SparkNotes: The Death of Ivan Ilych
- LitCharts: The Death of Ivan Ilych



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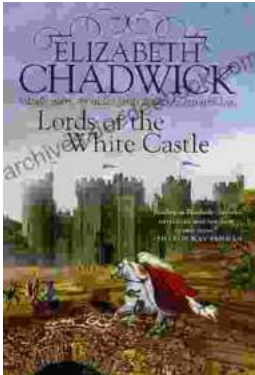
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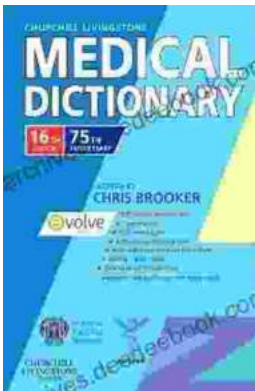
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