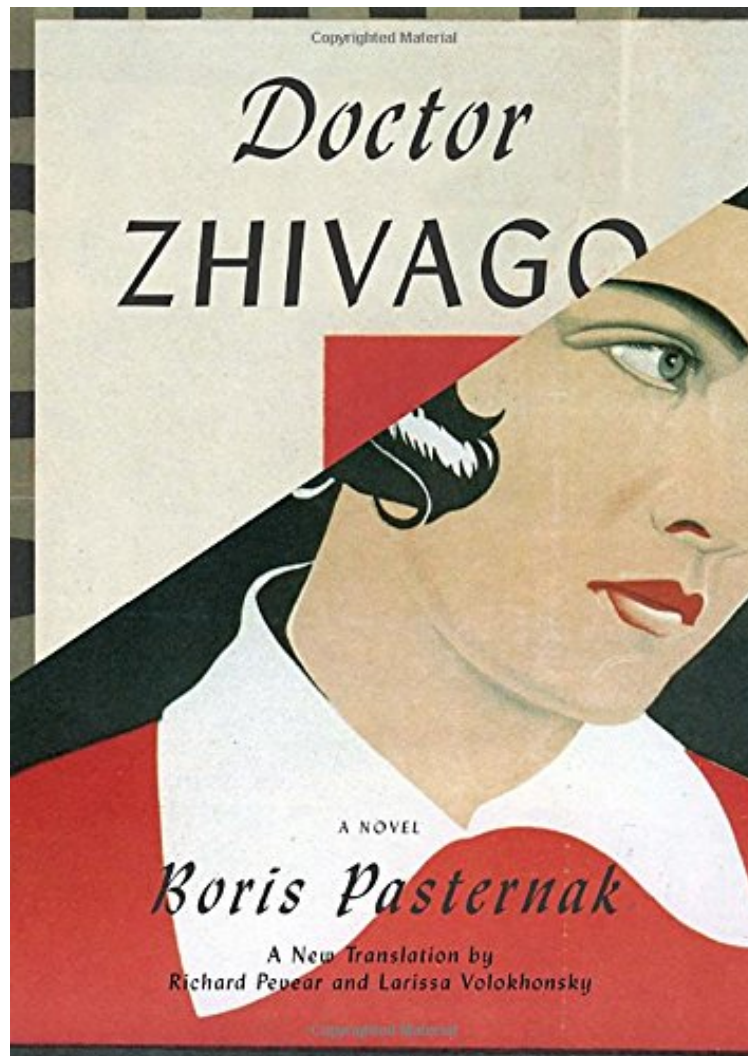


## Doctor Zhivago

*Boris Pasternak*

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**Boris Pasternak : Doctor Zhivago** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Doctor Zhivago:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Twentieth Century's Greatest Literary Work By Claude Roessiger Doctor Zhivago is the literary achievement of the 20th Century, the cornerstone to understanding the evils of the overwhelming state, and in some way the headstone for the Soviet experiment. Yet, were it only that, its purpose might have been fulfilled by an ardent political tract. It is far more than that, the most extraordinary prose, the most deftly constructed tale, reminiscent of the breadth of Shakespeare's oeuvre. It is not a small part of our understanding Pasternak's work to know that he was, in addition to Russia's most revered 20th Century poet, a translator of literature at the very highest level and--yes--of Shakespeare into Russian. The novel, that many surmised was autobiographical,

was: with the publication of Anna Pasternak's "Lara", detailing her great uncle's life and great love, Olga, we discover his muse, his extraordinary work, chaotically begun before he knew Olga, ultimately an homage to her, his Lara. Nothing one can read, not even Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago, seizes the reader with the force of Zhivago, or so remains in mind, every scene an eternal canvas. It's difficult, and often hyperbolic, to call a work, any work, the greatest work. For that to be meaningful, the work must play on many stages: beauty, philosophy, world events, life, and perhaps even love, in every sense of the word. The work must change the world. This is Zhivago.<sup>1</sup> of 1 people found the following review helpful. Absolutely superb

By Dr. Lee D. Carlson

Miserable cold with snow stained with blood, social disintegration amid misplaced, unfocused, unjustified revolution, along with an overbearing pressure to conform, where self-expression and private life are considered evil: these are the fodder for this beautiful story of love and death in early Soviet Russia. The characters are strong and self-aware, and one need not remember their names to follow the story that Boris Pasternak has created. There is no question that Pasternak wrote this story as a testament of the cruelties of the Soviet regime. The censorship of this novel is well-known and ample proof of its realism, and this serves as even more incentive to embed oneself in the novel. It is also a love story, and the sustained relationship between Lara and Yuri is one to both admire and emulate. Although focused, the characters' dialog is with only a few (planned) exceptions spontaneous, without any trace of regimentation or rigidity. One of the exceptions is Pasha Antipov, who through Pasternak's pen is morphed into Strelnikov, a brutal fanatic of the type that all new regimes need to invoke rapid change and force their ideologies on unwilling citizens. Pasternak is an optimist though, and he does not give up on Strelnikov, as the reader will find out towards the end of the book. Fanaticism, to work, takes concentration and effort, with lots of sloganeering and verbal and cognitive repetition. Pasha was unable to sustain that in the long run. Yuri Zhivago will have no part of the revolution, and he finds time, both literally and in his imagination, to continue with his poetry, even in the state of forced conscription or being surrounded by the other vestiges of the Soviet sewer. His love for Lara was however not a rebellion but a natural response to her altruism, intelligence and authenticity. Neither Yuri nor Lara were corrupted or tempted by the new regime. The lesson here is that creativity, love, and personal integrity are powerful because they are so intense, and also essentially effortless for those who possess them. Lara did everything "effortlessly" Zhivago notices, and her personal qualities gave her enough momentum that moved her without abatement through the tragedies of the revolution. Pasternak wants the reader to remember how dehumanized one can get from "political conceit"; how fanatical political convictions can even alter one's appearance "beyond recognition"; and how deliberate "reshaping of life" results in despair. The Russian people went from one cage to another in making the transition from Czarist to Soviet rule. A different color code but the bars were still as rigid in both. It takes the courage of a Pasternak, and others like him, to perturb us out of mental equilibrium, and better appreciate what life is all about: "the principle of self-renewal, it is constantly renewing and remaking and changing and transfiguring itself."<sup>36</sup> of 37 people found the following review helpful. In Praise of Boris Pasternak and Doctor Zhivago

By Paul Frandano

Just a few words, on the outside chance that I might tip a potential reader or two into reading this marvelous oh-so-Russian novel of lives caught up in the Great October Revolution of 1917 and its aftermath. Either you read Big Russian Novels (primarily of the 19th century) or not. If you do, you've probably already read, or tried to read, Zhivago. If you don't, I can offer a few reasons why you might want to read this one, in the Pevear-Volokhonsky translation or the earlier, less literal (but reportedly more graceful and poetic) Hayward-Harari version. Pasternak's cast of principal characters are to a person layered, complex, deeply conceived individuals swept up in the massive surge of events, struggling to keep their heads above water while, all around them, friends, family, and nameless millions of others are drowning in the turbulence. The arc of Yuri Zhivago alone - from enthusiastic, humanistic supporter of "regime change" to mordant skeptic of divisive ideas imposed as orthodoxy-driven policy - is typical of the evolutions and surprises Pasternak has written into the novel. His characters ruminate far and wide over imputed glories and horrors of Marxism, Bolshevism, Soviet Communism, the New Economic Policy (NEP), etc., and it was for precisely these candid criticisms of Soviet ideology and practice that Pasternak's novel was condemned (although unpublished) in the USSR - despite the deStalinization still underway at the time of Zhivago's publication, first in Italy then around the world (Soviet readers couldn't legally purchase a USSR/Russian edition until 1988). Needless to say, Pasternak was obliged to decline the Nobel Prize for Literature he won in 1958, mostly for Doctor Zhivago. For me - I spent most of my adult life as an analyst of foreign political, economic, social, and military affairs - Doctor Zhivago is particularly brilliant in its depiction of the horrors and dislocations war and civil war inflict on populations, and especially those segments with little or no recourse to "safety nets" of any variety - personal, familial, governmental, church-, religion-, or community-based, or other. Pasternak depicts the range of human ingenuity in such circumstances, as individuals cobble together the means of extracting brief moments of small pleasure from the tractor-pull of events. But through an accumulation of hundreds of small details, often in asides and parenthetical observations, Pasternak conveys the epochal common misfortunes and hardships of those whose accident of history made them Russians born around and after 1900. The novel compels us to consider that, at some point in the 20th century, such horrors of remorseless privation, despotism, and brutal inhumanity were visited upon the majority of humanity - the Europe of the World Wars, China for most of the century, and on and on - and how fortunate those spared such travails (and their descendents) are. Throughout,

Pasternak's characters comment on the flow of events, the political struggles, the conduct of, first, the World War and later the Civil War, the states-of-play at various key junctures, the putative winners and losers, the impositions of what must seem arbitrary policy (and then policy reversals), all in the name of advancing to some formless Communist Utopia but, to the cynically incisive observations of Zhivago and other perceptive observers, simply a Soviet variation of high-stakes politics of power-seeking individuals. THIS is how depotism and deprivation of freedom looks, and it's an experience alien to most American readers and one worthy of serious contemplation. Zhivago is filled with long, philosophical digressions that in general weigh humanism and spirituality against ideological politics; many found these passages tedious and a drag on the narrative. Suffice to say, I did not. Moreover, I found even Pevear-Volokhonsky's more literal translation filled with beautifully poetic moments, as were the translations of "Yuri Zhivago's poetry" that forms an appendix to the novel. In short, I found Doctor Zhivago a transporting literary experience and a profound reflection on Soviet Communism. And a book I will reread, soon, in the Hayward-Harari translation.

Boris Pasternak's widely acclaimed novel comes gloriously to life in a magnificent new translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, the award-winning translators of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and to whom, *The New York Review of Books* declared, "the English-speaking world is indebted." First published in Italy in 1957 amid international controversy—the novel was banned in the Soviet Union until 1988, and Pasternak declined the Nobel Prize a year later under intense pressure from Soviet authorities—Doctor Zhivago is the story of the life and loves of a poet-physician during the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. Taking his family from Moscow to what he hopes will be shelter in the Ural Mountains, Zhivago finds himself instead embroiled in the battle between the Whites and the Reds. Set against this backdrop of cruelty and strife is Zhivago's love for the tender and beautiful Lara: pursued, found, and lost again, Lara is the very embodiment of the pain and chaos of those cataclysmic times. Stunningly rendered in the spirit of Pasternak's original—resurrecting his style, rhythms, voicings, and tone—and including an introduction, textual annotations, and a translators' note, this edition of Doctor Zhivago is destined to become the definitive English translation of our time.

"The previous English-language translation of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* was made and brought out in England and the U.S. in extreme haste, on the eve of the 1958 Nobel Prize award to its author that triggered one of the fiercest political storms of the Cold War era. This new translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky is for the first time based on the authentic original text, reflects the present, deeper level of understanding of the great masterpiece of 20th century Russian literature and conveys its whole artistic richness with all its complexities and subtleties that had escaped the attention of the earlier translators and readers. "In faithfulness to the original, attention to stylistic details and nuances, lucidity, and brilliance it matches Pevear and Volokhonsky's superb translations of such monumental works of the classics of Russian literature as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The new edition will have an even more profound effect on our understanding of 20th century Russia than the first appearance of the novel had more than half a century ago."—Lazar Fleishman, Professor of Russian Literature, Stanford University "Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky have once again provided an outstanding translation of a major Russian novel. They capture Pasternak's 'voice' with great skill. Thanks to their sensitive rendering, those reading *Doctor Zhivago* in English can now get a far better sense of Pasternak's style, for they have produced an English text that conveys the nuances (along with the occasional idiosyncrasies) of Pasternak's writing. Notably as well, their version includes some phrases and sentences that inexplicably were omitted by the original translators. The text is accompanied by useful (but not overwhelming) notes in the back that provide information about many historical and cultural references that would otherwise be obscure for those coming to the novel for the first time. Without a doubt, their version will become the standard translation of the novel for years to come." —Barry Scherr, Mandel Family Professor of Russian, Dartmouth College

About the Author A poet, translator, and novelist, Boris Pasternak was born in Moscow in 1890. In 1958 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature but, facing threats from Soviet authorities, refused the prize. He lived in virtual exile in an artists' community near Moscow until his death in 1960. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky are the award-winning translators of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, among many other works of Russian literature. They are married and live in France.

Excerpt.  
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Part One The Five O'Clock Express  
1 They walked and walked and sang "Memory Eternal,"<sup>1</sup> and when they stopped, it seemed that the song went on being repeated by their feet, the horses, the gusts of wind. Passers-by made way for the cortège, counted the wreaths, crossed themselves. The curious joined the procession, asked: "Who's being buried?" "Zhivago," came the answer. "So that's it. Now I see." "Not him. Her." "It's all the same. God rest her soul. A rich funeral." The last minutes flashed by, numbered, irrevocable. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and those that dwell therein." The priest, tracing a cross, threw a handful of earth onto Marya Nikolaevna. They sang "With the souls of the righteous." A terrible bustle began. The coffin was closed, nailed shut, lowered in. A rain of clods drummed down as four shovels hastily filled the grave. Over it a small mound rose. A ten-year-old boy climbed onto it. Only in the state of torpor and

insensibility that usually comes at the end of a big funeral could it have seemed that the boy wanted to speak over his mother's grave. He raised his head and looked around from that height at the autumn wastes and the domes of the monastery with an absent gaze. His snub-nosed face became distorted. His neck stretched out. If a wolf cub had raised his head with such a movement, it would have been clear that he was about to howl. Covering his face with his hands, the boy burst into sobs. A cloud flying towards him began to lash his hands and face with the wet whips of a cold downpour. A man in black, with narrow, tight-fitting, gathered sleeves, approached the grave. This was the deceased woman's brother and the weeping boy's uncle, Nikolai Nikolaevich Vedenyapin, a priest defrocked at his own request. He went up to the boy and led him out of the cemetery. 2 They spent the night in one of the monastery guest rooms, allotted to the uncle as an old acquaintance. It was the eve of the Protection.2 The next day he and his uncle were to go far to the south, to one of the provincial capitals on the Volga, where Father Nikolai worked for a publisher who brought out a local progressive newspaper. The train tickets had been bought, the luggage was tied up and standing in the cell. From the nearby station the wind carried the plaintive whistling of engines maneuvering in the distance. Towards evening it turned very cold. The two ground-floor windows gave onto the corner of an unsightly kitchen garden surrounded by yellow acacia bushes, onto the frozen puddles of the road going past, and onto the end of the cemetery where Marya Nikolaevna had been buried that afternoon. The kitchen garden was empty, except for a few moiré patches of cabbage, blue from the cold. When the wind gusted, the leafless acacia bushes thrashed about as if possessed and flattened themselves to the road. During the night Yura was awakened by a tapping at the window. The dark cell was supernaturally lit up by a fluttering white light. In just his nightshirt, Yura ran to the window and pressed his face to the cold glass. Beyond the window there was no road, no cemetery, no kitchen garden. A blizzard was raging outside, the air was smoky with snow. One might have thought the storm noticed Yura and, knowing how frightening it was, reveled in the impression it made on him. It whistled and howled and tried in every way possible to attract Yura's attention. From the sky endless skeins of white cloth, turn after turn, fell on the earth, covering it in a winding sheet. The blizzard was alone in the world, nothing rivalled it. Yura's first impulse, when he got down from the windowsill, was to get dressed and run outside to start doing something. He was afraid now that the monastery cabbage would be buried and never dug out, now that mama would be snowed under and would be helpless to resist going still deeper and further away from him into the ground. Again it ended in tears. His uncle woke up, spoke to him of Christ and comforted him, then yawned, went to the window, and fell to thinking. They began to dress. It was getting light. 3 While his mother was alive, Yura did not know that his father had abandoned them long ago, had gone around various towns in Siberia and abroad, carousing and debauching, and that he had long ago squandered and thrown to the winds the millions of their fortune. Yura was always told that he was in Petersburg or at some fair, most often the one in Irbit. But then his mother, who had always been sickly, turned out to have consumption. She began going for treatment to the south of France or to northern Italy, where Yura twice accompanied her. Thus, in disorder and amidst perpetual riddles, Yura spent his childhood, often in the hands of strangers, who changed all the time. He became used to these changes, and in such eternally incoherent circumstances his father's absence did not surprise him. As a little boy, he had still caught that time when the name he bore was applied to a host of different things. There was the Zhivago factory, the Zhivago bank, the Zhivago buildings, a way of tying and pinning a necktie with a Zhivago tie-pin, and even some sweet, round-shaped cake, a sort of baba au rhum, called a Zhivago, and at one time in Moscow you could shout to a cabby: "To Zhivago!" just like "To the devil's backyard!" and he would carry you off in his sleigh to a fairy-tale kingdom. A quiet park surrounded you. Crows landed on the hanging fir branches, shaking down hoarfrost. Their cawing carried, loud as the crack of a tree limb. From the new buildings beyond the clearing, pure-bred dogs came running across the road. Lights were lit there. Evening was falling. Suddenly it all flew to pieces. They were poor. 4 In the summer of 1903, Yura and his uncle were riding in a tarantass and pair over the fields to Duplyanka, the estate of Kologrivov, the silk manufacturer and great patron of the arts, to see Ivan Ivanovich Voskoboinikov, a pedagogue and popularizer of useful knowledge. It was the feast of the Kazan Mother of God,3 the thick of the wheat harvest. Either because it was lunchtime or on account of the feast day, there was not a soul in the fields. The sun scorched the partly reaped strips like the half-shaven napes of prisoners. Birds circled over the fields. Its ears drooping, the wheat drew itself up straight in the total stillness or stood in shocks far off the road, where, if you stared long enough, it acquired the look of moving figures, as if land surveyors were walking along the edge of the horizon and taking notes. "And these," Nikolai Nikolaevich asked Pavel, a handyman and watchman at the publishing house, who was sitting sideways on the box, stooping and crossing his legs, as a sign that he was not a regular coachman and driving was not his calling, "are these the landowner's or the peasants'?" "Them's the master's," Pavel replied, lighting up, "and them there," having lighted up and inhaled, he jabbed with the butt of the whip handle towards the other side and said after a long pause, "them there's ours. Gone to sleep, eh?" he scolded the horses every so often, glancing at their tails and rumps out of the corner of his eye, like an engineer watching a pressure gauge. But the horses pulled like all horses in the world; that is, the shaft horse ran with the innate directness of an artless nature, while the outrunner seemed to the uncomprehending to be an arrant idler, who only knew how to arch its neck like a swan and do a squatting dance to the jingling of the harness bells, which its own leaps set going. Nikolai Nikolaevich was bringing Voskoboinikov the proofs of his little book on the land

question, which, in view of increased pressure from the censorship, the publisher had asked him to revise. "Folk are acting up in the district," said Nikolai Nikolaevich. "In the Pankovo area they cut a merchant's throat and a zemstvo man<sup>4</sup> had his stud burned down. What do you think of that? What are they saying in your village?" But it turned out that Pavel took an even darker view of things than the censor who was restraining Voskoboinikov's agrarian passions. "What're they saying? Folk got free and easy. Spoiled, they say. Can you do that with our kind? Give our muzhiks the head, they'll crush each other, it's God's truth. Gone to sleep, eh?" This was the uncle and nephew's second trip to Duplyanka. Yura thought he remembered the way, and each time the fields spread out wide, with woods embracing them in front and behind in a narrow border, it seemed to Yura that he recognized the place where the road should turn right, and at the turn there would appear and after a moment vanish the seven-mile panorama of Kologrivovo, with the river glistening in the distance and the railroad running beyond it. But he kept being mistaken. Fields were succeeded by fields. Again and again they were embraced by woods. The succession of these open spaces was tuned to a vast scale. You wanted to dream and think about the future. Not one of the books that were later to make Nikolai Nikolaevich famous had yet been written. But his thoughts were already defined. He did not know how near his hour was. Soon he was to appear among the representatives of the literature of that time, university professors and philosophers of the revolution – this man who had thought over all their themes and who, apart from terminology, had nothing in common with them. The whole crowd of them held to some sort of dogma and contented themselves with words and appearances, but Father Nikolai was a priest who had gone through Tolstoyism and revolution<sup>5</sup> and kept going further all the time. He thirsted for a wingedly material thought, which would trace a distinct, unhyprocritical path in its movement and would change something in the world for the better, and which would be noticeable even to a child or an ignoramus, like a flash of lightning or a roll of thunder. He thirsted for the new. Yura felt good with his uncle. He resembled his mother. He was a free spirit, as she had been, with no prejudice against anything inhabitual. Like her, he had an aristocratic feeling of equality with all that lived. He understood everything at first glance, just as she had, and was able to express his thoughts in the form in which they came to him at the first moment, while they were alive and had not lost their meaning. Yura was glad that his uncle was taking him to Duplyanka. It was very beautiful there, and the picturesqueness of the place also reminded him of his mother, who had loved nature and had often taken him on walks with her. Besides that, Yura was pleased that he would again meet Nika Dudorov, a high-school boy who lived at Voskoboinikov's and probably despised him for being two years younger, and who, when greeting him, pulled his hand down hard and bowed his head so low that the hair fell over his forehead, covering half his face.