

**ASSIGNMENT 1****Assigned: 13 February 2023****Total Marks: 15****Deadline: 20 February 2023, 11:55pm**

When I asked Chat GPT which was the greatest Russian short story of all time, it identified this to be Nikolai Gogol's "The Overcoat," and gave me the following reasoning:

"The Overcoat" tells the story of a poor and humble clerk named Akaky Akakievich who saves his money to purchase a new overcoat, only to have it stolen soon after. The story is known for its vivid and poignant depiction of the life of a poor man in pre-revolutionary Russia, as well as its powerful commentary on the human condition.

Gogol's mastery of the short story form is evident in "The Overcoat," which is notable for its concise and powerful writing, its psychological depth, and its vivid characterization. The story's themes of social inequality, the struggle for dignity and respect, and the power of the human spirit have made it a timeless classic, and it continues to be widely read and studied by scholars and readers alike.

On the other hand, Richard Pevear writes that Vissarion Belinsky, the great Russian literary critic, saw Gogol as

a champion of the little man and an enemy of the existing social order. The same view later became obligatory for Soviet critics. But whatever semblance of social criticism or satire there may be in the Petersburg tales is secondary and incidental. The pathos is momentary, and Gogol packs his clerks off to the madhouse or out of this world with a remarkably cool hand ... The 'laughter through tears of sorrow' that Pushkin noted elsewhere in his work is precisely laughter. The images it produces are too deeply ambiguous to bear any social message. He saw the fiction of ranks not as an evil to be exposed but as an instance of the groundlessness of reality itself and of the incantatory power of words.

Read Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky's translation of Gogol's "The Overcoat" and write a response in about a thousand words about how you think the story should be read. Your response should draw specific examples from the story and contain original analysis that does not include ideas that are already in this document:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Zqknv1y56iQ3wAtrDQe2U4SZT9yLdFCfUKOH/RvIbhF0/edit?usp=sharing>

Submit a PDF file named as your roll number (e.g. 2019121006.pdf).