

Readings in Russian Literature

General Tips for the Course

1. Focus on the movements we have discussed.
Romanticism, Realism, Classicism, etc. First, ensure that you understand what these were and what their key features consisted of. Then think about how the texts we have read incorporate these ideas and principles. Make sure you can provide examples from the text to support your argument.
2. Pay attention to the overall themes of a text.
For example: the unknown and supernatural elements in 'Queen of Spades'. It is not necessary to have the text memorized, but make sure you can summarize specific examples from the text that will support your argument.
3. Think about the choices the author has made.
What kind of narrator does the text have? Who is the intended audience? What details are told to the reader and what is left unsaid? What effect does this have on how the story is perceived?
4. Ask questions of the text. If something sticks out to you as odd, ask yourself why that may be.
It could be the choice of a word, something being left out, or a paragraph that *seems* out of place. Always assume that the writer has done this for a reason. Think about what parts of the text makes you have a particular opinion about a character or why some event makes you feel a certain way.
5. Structure arguments well!
You will only be given marks (and convince people) if you can make solid, compelling arguments for your ideas. Support your main idea with justifications from the text and the cultural context surrounding the text.
6. When constructing arguments, do not **just** quote text as an argument in and of itself.
Describe why the phrase you have chosen or the theme of the story supports your main argument explicitly. You must explain your choices.
7. Rereads are essential.
Often, knowing what happens throughout the story lets you pick up on things like general themes, foreshadowing, or recurring metaphors that you may have missed the first time around. Another reread after that might reveal something else.
8. Engage in class, ask questions regardless of what others may think.
Just because your opinion is not in the slides does not mean that it is not valid. Your question may be an interesting observation or take on the text. You may realize that you

have missed something essential to the story.

9. Good notes save time and marks.

Each text can be approached from a variety of angles. Efficient and thorough notes let you remember all of them months later, at a glance.