**Historical Analysis of Leo Tolstoy, *Hadji Murat* and Alexander Pushkin, *Journey to Arzrum***

***“What it Means to be Russian, A Look Through the Eyes of Imperial Nobility”***

From its scenery to the culture and people, Russia has had an indisputably colorful background. Through the use of writings by Tolstoy and Pushkin, we will look to the times of Imperial Russia and pull apart what it means to be Russian. These writings, both composed by nobility, paint a colorful picture of ideals, morals, and many other aspects of Russia’s social, economic, military, and political ideals. Although the resources were written by those of a specific social class, the viewpoints of the main character and others often depict people of varying backgrounds and classes. This will allow a more complete picture of Russian nobility and the lifestyle that they live and how they expect others to live. How do the nobles see themselves as members of society? How to they see their government? What is the picture they paint of the working class and peasantry? These and several other questions will be answered through an analysis of the materials mentioned above.

When the question “What does it mean to be Russian?” is posed, the first topic that typically comes to mind revolves around the social aspect of society. After reading *Hadji Murad*, one theme stands out that can be seen regularly through the entire piece, community. As we learned at the beginning of the semester, Russia covers a massive geographic area and includes nearly every climate type on the planet. One would expect that given this space a sense of community would be difficult to sustain. This would be true for the Country as a whole, but there are many close knit communities who heavily rely on each other to survive the varying climates and infertility over much of the landscape. Readers of Hajdi Murat will be greeted with many instances of heavy drinking and gambling, for instance as Tolstoy writes, “The officers had had some vodka and were now eating, and drinking porter. A drummer was uncorking their third bottle.” Given the frequency that large amounts of alcohol are regularly consumed throughout the book, it may seem alarming, but this perfectly depicts the strong social relationship that defines many Russians. In addition Tolstoy shows a level of trust and a sense of how close these groups can be when he writes the example that follows:

“They say the commander has had his fingers in the cashbox again,” remarked one of them in a lazy voice. “He lost at cards, you see.” “He’ll pay it back again,” said Panov. “Of course he will! He’s a good officer,” assented Avdeev.

This can be interpreted in many ways, though the best relates back to this sense of closeness. They watch out for everyone’s well being within their social group, and are able to help those in need. Examples of this are more difficult to

Day I:

* Russians surprised that Chechnians are civilized p14
* Chechnians have gambling problem, lose all money, “borrow” from other places to pay off debt
* Heavy drinkers (checknians)
* Need a sense of excitement, hwant to get out of st Petersburg life
* Nicholas portrayed in very bad light
  + People lie to him just to appease
  + Lacks morals – justifies cheating on wife by saying other woman not as pretty
* Shamil leader of chechnia and hadji both portrayed in very good light
* Hadji goes through motions at theater showing he doesn’t care for the nobility way of life

Relate this to the tale of to generals where they get fed by the peasant  
Also relate to the article on peter the great’s reforms and the impact they had on Russian morale

Day II:

Paper Ideas:

* Views from Russians on local populations vs views of local populations on Russians
  + Crimea vs Russia
  + Chechnia vs Russia
* Negative effects of Russian expansion
  + Culture change forced
  + Gambling
  + Alcoholism
  + War and death
* Positive effects of Russian expansion
  + New culture and ways of life
  + Fresh eyes seeing how to improve lands
  + New religions
  + Trade benefits
* **How does Russia achieve goals through actions and governing, and is it an effective and sustainable method?**