

FINAL QUESTIONS ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

11 F

Select any two of the following essay questions.

Thematic Motifs.

1. (A motif is the recurring idea or thought which acts as a unifying idea and sometimes develops commentary on characterization or the thesis of the work.¹) Discuss any one of the following motifs: The motif of Confession; Square Yard of Space; Suffering; Fresh Air.

Characters and Construction.

2. Construct a brief but thorough character analysis of any one of the following characters: Sonia Semenovna; Katerina Ivanovna; Svidrigailov; Porfiry Petrovich. Also explain clearly what power or importance the character wields in the construction of the plot and relationship to the actions of the hero, Raskolnikov.

Dreams.

3. Dostoevsky believed that rationalism, dominant since the eighteenth century, forbade to man's waking state much that was essential to life and which therefore took refuge in man's mental life during sleep. In a foreshadowing of Freud's theory of repression and disguised reappearance, Dostoevsky wrote in his notes, "When waking man turns to lies then at least uncorrupted dreams must speak the truth." Discuss the function of dreams in this novel.

Symbolism.

4. All great artists use the symbolic language of the imagination, but there is particular appropriateness in its presence in Crime and Punishment. In attacking rationalism Dostoevsky did not rely solely on the weapons of his opponent but used the whole gamut of his artistic resources among which oblique and symbolic devices played an important part. His deft use of symbolism gives his novel added power and effectiveness. Discuss, either in general, or specifically, the use of symbolism in this novel.

The Religious Idea.

5. Whatever the manifest theme of the novel, its latent theme is not that of crime, as such, or the criminal's innate need of punishment but the right to violent rebellion. It was the violence that Dostoevsky condemned, even as he was secretly drawn to it, fearing that if let loose it would tear down the authority of both heaven and earth, and Raskolnikov goes down to defeat, to prove his creator right. Discuss the religious idea of the book and comment particularly upon your reaction to the epilogue.

¹ Extract from Clifts Notes on Crime and Punishment.