Eugene Onegin

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

Alexander Pushkin was born at the end of the 18th century in Moscow, where his parents were members of the Russian nobility. His parents frequently left him in the care of his nurses and French tutors, and as a result, Pushkin mostly spoke French until he was 10 years old, only learning Russian through household serfs and his nanny. Pushkin published his first poem at age 15 and was already building a reputation as a writer when he graduated from the Imperial Lyceum, one of the most prestigious schools in St. Petersburg. His first major work was the long poem *Ruslan and Ludmila*, an epic fairy tale published in 1820. Perhaps his best-known work is *Eugene Onegin*, which he published serially, with the first volume released in 1825 and a completed edition published in 1833. In 1831, he married Natalia Goncharova, a Moscow heiress, with whom he had four children. Despite Pushkin's literary fame, by the end of his life, he had fallen into debt. He died at age 37 in a duel with Georges d'Anthès, whom Pushkin believed was having an affair with his wife. He remains one of the most popular Russian writers.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Eugene Onegin is set in a period of Russian history that is roughly contemporary to when Pushkin was writing it. One historical event specifically mentioned in the book is the Napoleonic Wars, which took place shortly before the start of *Eugene Onegin*. Napoleon attempted to invade Russia in 1812. After fierce fighting and many casualties, he ultimately retreated, leaving Russia victorious. This conflict went on to have major implications for European history, weakening Napoleon and ultimately leading to his downfall. It also helped establish Russia as a major world power. *Eugene Onegin* also references Europe's increasingly influence on Russian culture, particularly among Russia's upper classes. This was the result of policies by Peter the Great and later Catherine the Great to modernize Russia and make it more similar to Western European countries. This period of reform is known as the Russian Enlightenment. *Eugene Onegin* takes place after this Enlightenment. Although Emperor Alexander I took some steps to begin abolishing the system of serfdom in Russia (in which unfree peasants were bound to noble landlords in a system similar to slavery), serfdom is still present during *Eugene Onegin* and would not be fully abolished in Russia until 1861.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Eugene Onegin is one of the foundational works of Russian literature, influencing many of the novels and poems that followed it. Although it is generally considered a Romantic novel and not a work of realism, its ideas about Russian culture and identity went on to influence a whole generation of Russian writers who did strive for realism, including Russian author of Ukrainian origin Nikolai Gogol (*Dead Souls*), Fyodor Dostoevsky (*Crime and Punishment*), and Leo Tolstoy (*War and Peace*). More recent authors influenced by the novel include Vladimir Nabokov (*Lolita*), who translated an influential English-language version of *Eugene Onegin*, and Elif Batuman, whose novel *Either/Or* follows a protagonist who reads *Eugene Onegin*. The story of *Eugene Onegin* has also been adapted in several forms, perhaps most famously into an opera by Tchaikovsky, but also into ballets, plays, musicals, and films. Pushkin himself references many of his influences within the text of Eugene Onegin itself. His Romantic, sometimes-autobiographical style takes influence from Lord Byron (*Don Juan*), while his focus on the complexities of love and marriage can be traced back to Samuel Richardson (*Pamela*). The concept of telling a long story in verse has ancient roots, and nearly every epic poem takes some influence from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, perhaps the two most noteworthy works in the genre.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Eugene Onegin
- **When Written:** 1823–1833
- **Where Written:** St. Petersburg, Russia
- **When Published:** Published serially beginning in 1825; complete edition published in 1833
- **Literary Period:** Romanticism, Russian Golden Age of Literature
- **Genre:** Verse Novel, Russian Literature
- **Setting:** St. Petersburg and the surrounding countryside; Moscow
- **Climax:** Tatyana rejects Eugene.
- **Antagonist:** Melancholy
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

The Death of Pushkin. Some of Pushkin's contemporaries blamed his death on his wife, Natalia Goncharova, whose alleged infidelity led to his fatal duel. Some modern historians, however, take a more favorable view of her, noting that she helped protect him from the tsarist government and meticulously preserved his letters, which were later published.

Current Events. Statues, streets, and monuments of Alexander Pushkin became a source of controversy in Ukraine after the Russian invasion of 2022, when some were renamed or torn down. Some Ukrainians believe that elements of Pushkin's work specifically support Russian imperialism. Others simply object on the grounds that Pushkin himself had no connection to Ukraine and believe that statues of him were initially erected as an attempt to spread Russian culture.

PLOT SUMMARY

Eugene Onegin is a man in his mid-20s living in St. Petersburg, Russia, in the early part of the 19th century. His story is told by an unnamed narrator, a well-educated acquaintance of Eugene's who sometimes diverges from Eugene's story to reflect on the love affairs of his own youth. Eugene used to live a decadent lifestyle of going to feasts, balls, and ballets, but eventually this lifestyle starts to bore him, leaving him feeling melancholy and adrift. His father dies, and not long after, his wealthy uncle dies too, leaving Eugene with a fortune and a large home in the country.

For a couple days after his uncle's funeral, Eugene takes pleasure in the tranquil countryside, but he soon gets bored, and his melancholy returns. One day, however, Eugene meets the young man Vladimir Lensky, who is still full of enthusiasm for life and has dreams of one day becoming a great poet. Lensky entertains Eugene with stories of his own attempts at romance, in particular with stories of the Larin family. Lensky is in love with the beautiful Olga, but as he tells the story to Eugene, Eugene is more intrigued by Olga's shy older sister Tatyana, who likes to read lots of foreign romance **books**. One day, Lensky invites Eugene to meet the Larins himself.

After Eugene's meeting the Larins, Tatyana is intrigued by him and eventually falls in love with him, to the point where she is so obsessed that she can think about little else. Soon, she writes Eugene a love letter. Although the love letter moves Eugene and causes him to have feelings he hasn't had in a long time, when he finally speaks with Tatyana, he rejects her. Eugene gives a speech about how, although a part of him loves Tatyana, he would ultimately make a bad husband, so any potential relationship between the two of them is futile. Tatyana is crushed and embarrassed by the rejection.

Eugene doesn't see the Larins for a while after that. Sometime later, Lensky, who has become engaged to Olga, invites Eugene to attend Tatyana's name day celebration. Although Eugene attempts to be polite to Tatyana during the celebration, he is annoyed with the whole situation. Eventually, he decides to dance with Olga as a way of getting back at Lensky for inviting him. Eugene is an excellent dancer, and when Lensky sees them, he believes that Olga has even fallen in love with Eugene. Lensky leaves angrily, and the next morning, he sends his friend Zaretsky to challenge Eugene to a duel with Lensky.

Eugene is reluctant to duel, showing up late and only coming up with a second for the duel at the last minute. Nevertheless, when the duel commences, Eugene fires first and manages to fatally shoot Lensky. Immediately, Eugene regrets what he's done, but it's too late to save Lensky. Lensky dies and is buried under a small gravestone in the forest. Olga grieves him for a little while but soon seems to forget him and goes off to marry a lancer instead.

Eugene is haunted by his past actions and withdraws from the world for a while. Meanwhile, after Olga moves out, Tatyana's mother, Dame Larin, suggests that it's time for Tatyana herself to marry and that the best place to find a husband for her will be in Moscow. The whole family goes there for the winter, where there are many balls and social events with eligible bachelors. Although Tatyana feels out of place in this world, eventually she attracts the attention of a general who makes a sensible choice for her to marry.

Years later, at a different ball in St. Petersburg, Eugene sees a beautiful woman with a general and is surprised to realize that she is Tatyana. He becomes suddenly obsessed with her and starts writing poetry in earnest for the first time in a long while. Eventually, he writes her love letters and starts sending them. But when he finally goes to visit her in person after sending the letters, she rejects him. She tells him he's too late—she's already married and has no intention to be unfaithful. Eugene leaves full of regrets, and the narrator says it's time to part ways with Eugene, hoping that the reader at least found something interesting in his story.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Eugene Onegin – Eugene Onegin is a man in his mid-20s who used to live the life of an urban dandy in St. Petersburg but who has become melancholy lately and doesn't enjoy the decadent things that used to give him pleasure. He moves out to the countryside after the deaths of both his father and his wealthy uncle, and there he meets a young man named Lensky. Eugene's friendship with the youthful and passionate Lensky at first helps him to rediscover some of the joy in life. Their friendship's gradual undoing begins when Lensky tells Eugene about the nearby Larin family, including daughters Olga and Tatyana. Although a love letter from Tatyana helps stir romantic feelings in Eugene, he rejects her and instead tells Tatyana that he can never marry her for practical reasons, reflecting how cynical and jaded Eugene has become at that point in his life. Eugene learns the consequences of his hard-heartedness, however, when he carelessly agrees to a duel with Lensky and kills him. The regret of killing his friend so senselessly hangs over Eugene for the rest of his life. Although he tries to get

back some of his former happiness by apologizing to Tatyana, she's married by then, and it's too late. Eugene represents the emptiness of upper-class Russian life, and the ultimate tragedy of his life highlights the consequences that rash decisions in youth can have later on.

Vladimir Lensky – Vladimir Lensky is a passionate young man with ambitions to be a great poet who becomes friends with the older Eugene when he moves to the countryside. Although at times the narrator satirizes Lensky, suggesting that he may not be the great poet that he attempts to be, Eugene is genuinely charmed by him, and Olga also falls in love with Lensky at one point. Still, the passion that motivates Lensky's poetry also becomes his fatal flaw, as he gets so angry at Eugene over a joke that he challenges him to a duel. Lensky's death in the duel goes on to haunt Eugene for the rest of his life, while Lensky's own legacy is reduced to a humble gravestone in the forest. Lensky represents the passions of youth, and his death shows how these passions often don't survive into adulthood and can even be self-destructive.

Tatyana Larin – Tatyana is the shy eldest daughter of Dame Larin and Dmitry Larin as well as the sister of Olga. Although she is reserved and spends most of her time reading **books**, particularly romances from foreign countries, Eugene takes an interest in her as soon as he hears about her in Lensky's tales of the Larin family. Tatyana eventually falls in love with Eugene and writes him a passionate letter. While Eugene is moved by the letter, he rejects Tatyana with a speech in which he claims that although he loves her, he's rejecting her because he'd make an awful husband. Tatyana is heartbroken and becomes even more withdrawn from the world, eventually going to Moscow with her family and marrying a general whom she doesn't love but who makes a sensible match. When Eugene comes back to confess his love to her, she turns the tables, giving her own speech about how she's married and has no intention of being an unfaithful wife. Like many characters in the story, Tatyana experiences a loss of innocence, and she gives up her girlhood dreams of romance in order to fulfill her family's marriage expectations.

The Narrator – The narrator who tells Eugene's story is acquainted with Eugene, Lensky, and some of the other major figures of *Eugene Onegin*. He is a writer who is a little older than most of the characters, and he bears many similarities to the real-life author of the novel, Alexander Pushkin. The narrator has a lot of sympathy for the melancholy and world weariness that Eugene experiences, but he is quick to point out his differences from Eugene as well—notably, that the narrator loves the countryside while Eugene soon bores of it. The narrator is well-educated and often takes a satirical or sarcastic tone, sometimes going on tangents that are thematically relevant but not connected to the plot. The narrator helps to set the tone of the novel, creating a sympathetic and tragic portrait of the main characters while also showing these characters limitations and at times even portraying them as humorous.

Olga Larin – Olga is the daughter of Dame Larin and Dmitry Larin, as well as the younger sister of Tatyana. Most characters, particularly Lensky, consider her more beautiful than Tatyana, and Olga is also much more extraverted and social than her sister. Although she claims to be deeply in love with Lensky, the elder Eugene can sense that Olga might not be as devoted as she claims. This ends up being proven true, both when Olga seems to fall in love with Eugene after one dance and later when Olga ends up getting over Lensky's death quickly, going off to marry a lancer. Olga represents the fickleness of youth and how even young passions that seem strong in the moment may soon be replaced.

Zaretsky – Zaretsky is a roguish friend of Lensky's who becomes his second in Lensky's duel against Eugene. Although both Eugene and Lensky enjoy Zaretsky's company, he enables the duel between those two to happen by delivering Lensky's challenge. Zaretsky is a minor character in the story, but his commitment to macho Russian traditions like the duel is one of the factors that leads to Lensky's tragic early death.

Dame Larin – Dame Larin is the wife of Dmitry Larin and mother of Tatyana and Olga. Although she loved another man when she married Dmitry, she has since tried to make the best of it. Despite her own experience being forced into marriage, she does the same when she relocates the family to Moscow to get Tatyana married, reflecting how courtship traditions get passed down through generations, sometimes by coercion.

The General – The general is the man Tatyana ultimately marries. She meets him after traveling to Moscow following Eugene's rejection and her subsequent heartbreak. Tatyana's marriage to the general marks her maturation and the abandonment of her former youthful ideals and naivety that comes with it. As the general's wife, Tatyana assimilates into urban Russian culture, becoming adept at the superficial social norms she never had to learn in the country. When Eugene unexpectedly reunites with Tatyana at the end of the book and he tries to rekindle their romance, she refuses to break up her marriage for him.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Dmitry Larin – Dmitry Larin is the husband of Dame Larin and the father of Tatyana and Olga. His wife didn't initially love him but tried to make the best of it, showing how passion was often absent from Russian marriages at the time.

The Nurse – Tatyana's nurse tells her stories about being forced to marry at a young age, which shatter some of the romantic ideas about love that Tatyana got from **books**.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

YOUTH, REGRETS, AND THE PASSAGE OF TIME

Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* is a novel about youthful passions that have consequences and continue to haunt the characters even as months and years pass. At the heart of it is a duel between Lensky and Eugene, which arises from a conflict that began as a harmless prank. Before the duel, Eugene is a jaded man in his 20s who has stopped seeing pleasure in the world. Lensky, meanwhile, is an enthusiastic teenager who enjoys telling Eugene about his romantic exploits, which remind Eugene of his own happier youth. But this friendship all falls apart one evening when Eugene dances with Olga, Lensky's fiancée, who is also full of youthful passion and briefly becomes infatuated with Eugene. Lensky acts rashly in the passion of youth and takes Eugene's dancing with Olga as a serious offense, challenging Eugene to a duel. Meanwhile, Eugene is reluctant to duel but goes along with it anyway, in part because of how resigned to his fate the past few years have made him. It's only after Eugene shoots and kills Lensky that he realizes their conflict didn't have to end that way. While Lensky's youthful enthusiasm once reminded Eugene of how life could be happier, in death, Lensky's youth just reminds Eugene of all the things Lensky never got to do in life.

In one sense, the passing of time sweeps away Lensky's memory from the earth, reducing him to humble gravestone. After his death, his former fiancée, Olga, soon marries to a lancer who serves with the military. But in another sense, Lensky remains alive in the regrets that Eugene carries with him wherever he goes. The narrator, who is himself a minor character in the story, sometimes goes off on tangents in which he reflects on his own youth with regret, as when he laments a failed romance. The narrator's comments on Eugene and Lensky's story suggest that while youth can be an exhausting and tumultuous time because of the intensity of passions a person experiences, maturity comes with its own challenges, including regrets over all the mistakes of youth. *Eugene Onegin* is a novel that celebrates the vitality of youth, but it also shows how the passions of youth can lead to mistakes that haunt people as they age.

LOVE, COURTSHIP, AND MARRIAGE

Eugene Onegin is a novel about the attempted courtships of Lensky and Olga, and Eugene and Tatyana. Although the narrator claims that love and romance are some of the most important parts of life, his portrayal of courtship rituals and marriage is often humorous and cynical. In the case of the sisters Olga and Tatyana, for example, the narrator notes how each fails to live up to the heroines who appear in romantic novels. Although Olga is beautiful and Lensky loves her a lot, the more mature Eugene has an easier time seeing Olga's flaws, which include coldness and fickleness. Although she falls deeply in love with Lensky, she seems to decide she prefers Eugene after just one dance, suggesting that her love may have been shallow to begin with. Meanwhile, the narrator notes how Tatyana is not traditionally beautiful, is shy, and has unrefined country manners. Her sheltered existence causes her to become obsessive in her love of Eugene. For all her flaws, Tatyana's love is pure, and yet Eugene rejects it anyway. His rejection speech to her is technically polite but also condescending, as instead of following his emotions, he logically and perhaps pompously tells her why their marriage wouldn't work, breaking Tatyana's heart.

While the narrator portrays the early courtship troubles of Olga and Tatyana with humor, things take a darker turn as the novel goes on. Olga shows the true extent of her fickleness by forgetting all about Lensky and marrying someone else very shortly after Lensky's death, proving Eugene's claim that she can be as "cold" as the **moon**. Meanwhile, Tatyana follows Eugene's suggestion to think practically and forms a favorable marriage with a general, only for Eugene to realize too late that he loves Tatyana after all. In each case, the issue is not necessarily with love but with the rituals surrounding it. Even before Olga and Tatyana were born, their mother, Dame Larin consented to marry a man she didn't love, Dmitry Larin, in order to fulfill social expectations. Tatyana's nurse had an even worse experience of being married off young, which frightens Tatyana and shows her a dark side of adult relationships. On the other hand, by avoiding marriage for philosophical reasons, Eugene just created a different problem for himself, with his personal philosophies becoming just as stifling as the social rituals other characters follow. Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* depicts how love can be complicated and how the social norms around courtship can stifle or distort love, making it difficult to find true love and even more difficult to marry for it. At the same time, the negative outcomes that befall characters who become consumed with feeling show how unrestrained passion can also lead a person astray. The novel ultimately suggests, then, that love is a balance, with both too much passion and too much restraint being equally dangerous.

POETRY VS. REALITY

A novel written in verse , *Eugene Onegin* also features plenty of references to poetry throughout. Near the beginning of the novel, the narrator makes clear that Eugene is a very different character from the

narrator himself—he is not just a thinly disguised self-portrait like the heroes of many of the English poet Lord Byron's epic poems. While this may be true, the narrator's comment is humorous because although the narrator may not be like Eugene, the narrator *is* like the novel's real author, Alexander Pushkin, who was also known for poetry and about the same age as the narrator. The novel is full of statements by the narrator and others that either directly or humorously suggest that poetry doesn't reflect reality. The epitome of this is Lensky, who imagines himself as a great poet as he chronicles his passion for Olga, even though it eventually becomes clear that Olga may not have felt the same way about Lensky, making his love poems false.

Still, while Lensky's poetry may be in part a romantic fantasy or even delusion, it manages to capture something truthful about youthful emotion. The narrator may subtly make fun of Lensky as he highlights how the reality of life fails to match Lensky's romantic visions of being a great poet, and yet the narrator acknowledges that when writing love poetry, this type of enthusiasm can be even more important than technical poetic skill. Despite his greater life experience and jadedness toward youth, even the unpoetic Eugene turns to poetry when trying to find a way to express his complicated feelings toward Tatyana after she has already married a general. The novel thus shows how although poetry may not always tell literal truth, it can help express true emotions that are difficult to convey with the language of ordinary life. In *Eugene Onegin*, Pushkin often humorously portrays poetry as distorting real life, but he ultimately explores how despite poetry's tendency to distort the events of real life, poetry is sometimes the only suitable way to express the intensely passionate thoughts and emotions a person truly feels.

RUSSIAN IDENTITY

The novel *Eugene Onegin* explores what it meant to be Russian in the 19th century. As the narrator points out, one of the main contradictions of Russian life at the time was that Russian identity was often directly influenced by other countries, particularly in Europe. The epitome of this is Eugene Onegin himself, who is in some ways the quintessential cosmopolitan Russian of the era, going out to all the social functions, at least until they start to bore him. But Eugene is always reading **books**, wearing clothes, and eating food from foreign countries. Even Tatyana, who lives out in the country, is always reading novels in English or French, and when it comes to love letters, she is more proficient at writing in French than Russian. The narrator takes a satirical tone, noting how many Russians seem to want little to do with traditional Russian culture. This neglect is reflected even in the status of the country's roads and bridges, which are in a state of heavy decay. It's also present in the concept of "Russian soul," which seems to refer to a general sense of dissatisfaction that many characters—particularly Eugene—feel with their lives.

Still, there are also more neutral or even at times patriotic references to Russian culture. Despite Eugene's own boredom with social events, the narrator portrays how music and dancing can be joyful occasions and are a big part of Russian culture. The novel also shows how religion, particularly Christianity, blends with Russian culture, as worldwide celebrations like name days and Christmas get intermingled with local Russian traditions and superstitions. And despite the narrator's criticisms of Russia's roads, the narrator becomes invigorated when talking about the beauty of Russia's natural world, which can be harsh but is also beautiful. Perhaps the narrator's most patriotic comment is a reference to the pride people feel about the fact that the French Napoleon never managed to capture Moscow. And so, taken as a whole, the novel *Eugene Onegin* presents a nuanced view of Russian identity, often portraying Russia in critical terms as a country dominated by foreign, European culture but ultimately showing some of the things that made Russian unique and even sometimes taking pride in them.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

BOOKS

Many of the major characters in *Eugene Onegin* are avid readers, and books symbolize a romantic view of life that doesn't always reflect reality. One of the most avid readers is Tatyana, whose fondness for foreign romance novels shows how considerably outside influences, particular form Europe, shaped Russian identity at the time. Her parents tolerate her interest in books because they see it as inconsequential, but in fact, the romantic ideas that Tatyana gets from books are part of the reason why she falls so deeply in love with Eugene. Eugene is also a big reader, who searches unsuccessfully in the novels he reads for a sense of purpose in life. At one point after being rejected by Eugene, Tatyana goes through Eugene's old collection of books, trying to look at pages he might have read and understand what his interpretations say about him as a person. She finds nothing conclusive and wonders if Eugene is just an empty collection of the things he's read—in a similar way to how Tatyana herself got her ideas about romance through books.

Still, *Eugene Onegin* and particularly its narrator often have a satirical tone, and so some of these arguments about the worthlessness of books should be taken with a grain of salt. Although Tatyana ultimately makes the socially acceptable choice at the end of the novel when she marries a prestigious general, there is something sad about her leaving behind her

romantic ideas from childhood, which might have helped her avoid a loveless marriage like the one her mother, Dame Larin, entered into before her. Similarly, the time in Eugene's life when he's most interested in book and poetry is when he finally admits to himself that he loves Tatyana and wants to be with her. Although Eugene's period of writing poetry is ultimately futile and ends with Tatyana's rejection, it suggests that a person who reads and writes can become more in touch with their true feelings. In *Eugene Onegin*, books have a powerful effect on shaping people's identities, sometimes filling them up with false and romantic ideas but also helping them to get in touch with and make sense of their own emotions.

THE MOON

The moon is a recurring image in *Eugene Onegin* that stands for brightness and beauty—but also coldness and distance. Eugene first references the moon to describe Olga, Lensky's beloved. According to Eugene, Olga is "round and fair of face" but also "cold and dead," which makes her resemble the moon in both appearance and personality. Lensky, however, takes offense at this description. While Lensky could be taking offense at Eugene's lack of reverence for Olga, it's also possible that Lensky reacts so negatively because Eugene has correctly observed the superficiality of Olga and Lensky's romance, which looks pretty on the surface but ultimately offers very little in the way of genuine, mutual love and support. Notably, the moon waxes and wanes in cycles, and this reflects the waxing and waning of unrestrained—or unexamined—passion. When Lensky is intoxicated with love for Olga, it blinds him to the reality of the romance, which is ultimately superficial and fleeting. Similarly, Tatyana's passionate love for Eugene temporarily blinds her to his shallowness.

Later, however, the moon comes to be more associated with Tatyana, who to everyone except Eugene lives in the shadow of the brighter Olga. Like the moon, Tatyana is often distant, both emotionally and sometimes physically, as she tends to stay inside and avoid socializing. Tatyana herself takes an interest in the moon after she falls in love with Eugene and tries to use the moon as part of a divination ritual to discover her future husband. Although Tatyana doesn't realize it, the moon does indeed give a hint about her marital future, showing how Eugene will coldly reject her, leading her to form her own cold and distant marriage with a general.

The cold beauty of the moon is also significant because it reflects the Russian landscape and countryside. As the narrator describes, Russia is often covered in snow, which makes travel slow and dangerous, but which also gives the land a tranquil beauty. The harsh, unrefined beauty of the moonlit Russian countryside points to a different aspect of the moon's beauty, one unsullied by the artifice of social norms and romantic ideals. The moonlit Russian countryside—though harsh and unforgiving—offers a genuine, deeper beauty that eludes many of the characters as they turn to Western ideals and society to shape their understandings of life and of love. The moon in *Eugene Onegin* represents the coldness and isolation of life in Russia, particularly when it comes to romance, but it also hints at how even a harsh life—like the country's harsh, moonlike landscape—can have moments of beauty.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Oxford University Press edition of *Eugene Onegin* published in 2009.

Chapter 1 Quotes

'My uncle, man of firm convictions…
By falling gravely ill, he's won
A due respect for his afflictions—
The only clever thing he's done.
May his example profit others;
But God, what deadly boredom, brothers,
To tend a sick man night and day,
Not daring once to steal away!
And, oh, how base to pamper grossly
And entertain the nearly dead,
To fluff the pillows for his head,
And pass him medicines morosely—
While thinking under every sigh:
The devil take you, Uncle. Die!'

Related Characters: Eugene Onegin (speaker), The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

This begins the novel and features the words of Eugene Onegin himself rather than the narrator. Eugene's opening lines take a tone of mocking respect as Eugene refers to his ill uncle. At first, Eugene says that his uncle is a man of "firm convictions," which seems like a compliment. But as Eugene goes on, he says that the "only clever thing" his uncle has ever done is getting sick. Eugene goes on to complain about what a pain it is to have to take care of a person on their sickbed, saying that it's a chore to always have to fluff their pillows or give them medicine.

Eugene's complaints help establish right away what a selfish,

cynical person he's become. Although his uncle is suffering on his deathbed, all Eugene can think about is what an inconvenience this death is, and so he hopes his uncle will die soon. Eugene's goal in life is to avoid boredom, and so he makes no time for serious matters like tending to an ailing family member. As the novel goes on, Eugene's selfishness comes back to haunt him as he gets bored of materials pleasures and struggles to find meaning in life. This opening passage is important, then, because it establishes Eugene's character flaws, the consequences of which the novel will then explore in its subsequent chapters.

> We still, alas, cannot forestall it—
> This dreadful ailment's heavy toll;
> The *spleen* is what the English call it,
> We call it simply *Russian soul*.
> 'Twas this our hero had contracted;
> And though, thank God, he never acted
> To put a bullet through his head,
> His former love of life was dead.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 22

Explanation and Analysis

This quote introduces the concept of "Russian soul," the main internal conflict for Eugene's character, and the remainder of the novel explores how he attempts to deal with it. In this quote, the narrator attempts to describe a vague heavy feeling that is weighing Eugene down and making it difficult for him to enjoy aspects of life he once took pleasure in. One of the symptoms of this condition seems to be suicidal feelings, as the narrator suggests that Eugene considered shooting himself even though he "never acted" on this desire.

The references to the English term "spleen" and the related term "Russian soul" show how Eugene's melancholy condition is universal and not just one unique to him. The term "Russian soul" suggests that there is something inherently Russian about Eugene's unhappiness and that perhaps it is influenced by his surroundings and the values of Russian society and culture. That Russians refer to the condition as "Russian soul," whereas the English refer to it as the "spleen" suggests that this sort of melancholy is a fundamental part of Russian culture and the spirit of Russia's people. It also indicates that this characteristic melancholy persists despite Western Europe's growing influence on Russia at this period of history.

> And then he saw that country byways—
> With no great palaces, no streets,
> No cards, no balls, no poets' feats—
> Were just as dull as city highways;
> And spleen, he saw, would dog his life,
> Like shadow or a faithful wife.
> But I was born for peaceful roaming,
> For country calm and lack of strife;
> My lyre sings! And in the gloaming
> My fertile fancies spring to life.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 28

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes Eugene Onegin's reaction after he leaves his urban life in St. Petersburg to go to the Russian countryside, where his wealthy uncle has died and left him a home. At first, Eugene is impressed by the beauty and tranquility of the region, believing he's finally found a cure for the dissatisfaction with life that stayed with him constantly throughout his time in the city. But after only a short while, he realizes that the countryside can be just as boring as the city in its own way, and he learns that his melancholy feelings will continue to follow him wherever he goes, "like shadow or a faithful wife."

As is often the case in the novel, the narrator makes his own commentary on the action. Here, he claims to disagree with Eugene's thoughts on nature. The narrator says he will play his lyre in praise of nature, referencing an ancient musical instrument associated with Greek and Roman poets who wrote pastoral poetry in praise of the natural world. Arguably, the narrator's praise for the healing powers of nature are so exaggerated that they become almost farcical, cutting a sharp contrast with Eugene Onegin's equally farcical dismissal of the Russian countryside and nature in general as fundamentally boring and unworthy of his time. By highlighting the narrator and Eugene's extreme, opposing attitudes toward nature, the novel points to how their respective cultural backgrounds limit their perceptions of the world around them. It also foregrounds nature and poetry as two of the novel's main themes.

Chapter 2 Quotes

Another squire chose this season
To reappear at his estate
And gave the neighbours equal reason
For scrutiny no less irate.
Vladimir Lensky, just returning
From Göttingen with soulful yearning,
Was in his prime—a handsome youth
And poet filled with Kantian truth.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 37

Explanation and Analysis

This quote introduces a romantic young squire named Vladimir Lensky, who goes on to become one of the most important characters in the story. The narrator describes Lensky, who is in his late teens, as "in his prime," and this reflects the narrator's sense that one's youth is the best (or at least happiest) time of one's life. Although the narrator has positive things to say about Lensky, calling him a "handsome youth," this passage also hints that not everyone shares this attitude, as Lensky becomes the object of intense "scrutiny" from his neighbors.

This quote is yet another example in the story of Europe's increasing influence on Russian identity. Lensky has been away in Göttingen, a city in Germany, trying to find meaning in life, which reflects how Russia as a whole has been looking toward Europe for cultural depth. The narrator also describes Lensky as seeking "Kantian truth" which is a reference to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. In this particular case, the reference to Kant seems to suggest that Lensky sees himself as using his poetry to explore deep philosophical issues, but as the novel goes on, it becomes clear that Lensky's interests are shallower and more mundane. This becomes a running theme in the novel, as Lensky's grand ideas about himself and his poetry don't always match up with reality.

From early youth she read romances,
And novels set her heart aglow;
She loved the fictions and the fancies
Of Richardson and of Rousseau.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Tatyana Larin, Olga Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

This quote introduces Tatyana, who unlike her sociable sister Olga, likes to spend most of her time indoors, doing solitary activities like reading. This passage notes that she particularly loves "romances" including the popular novels of the writers Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Tatyana's constant, passionate reading suggests that she is full of curiosity but also excitable, perhaps unable to the tell the difference between the romantic fantasies she reads and real life.

Once again, this passage emphasizes how Russian life and Russian identity increasingly took influence from Europe. Richardson was an English writer and Rousseau was a French one, showing how Tatyana gets her ideas about romance by looking abroad rather than to her home country. In fact, when it comes time for Tatyana to write a love letter of her own, she writes it in French because she feels more comfortable writing about love in that language than Russian, illustrating how fully her life has been shaped both by what she's read and by European values.

Her husband at the time was still
Her fiancé—against her will!
For she, in spite of family feeling,
Had someone else for whom she pined—
A man whose heart and soul and mind
She found a great deal more appealing;
This Grandison was fashion's pet,
A gambler and a guards cadet.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Tatyana Larin, Olga Larin, Dame Larin, Dmitry Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 49

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes Dame Larin, the mother of Tatyana and Olga, back when she was still young and unmarried.

Although Dame Larin goes on to be a relatively conventional mother, encouraging her own daughters to try to find sensible matches, back before she got married, she had more romantic ideas about the world, not unlike the ones that Tatyana has gotten from the romance books she reads.

The man that Dame Larin loved instead of Dmitry (her eventual husband) was a dandy ("fashion's pet"), a gambler, and a low-ranking military man. This suggests that by any normal metric, he wasn't a sensible choice for a husband, being reckless, bad with money, and possibly violent. Still, Dame Larin saw him as if he were Charles Grandison, the hero of Samuel Richardson's *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, who gallantly saves the heroine from being kidnapped. Dame Larin saw this nameless guard cadet as potentially saving her from a marriage to Dmitry like the heroic Grandison, but instead, Dame Larin goes through with the marriage and tries to make the best of it. This shows how Dame Larin once had similar romantic dreams to her daughter Tatyana but also shows how these romantic dreams often fall apart when faced with reality.

Chapter 3 Quotes

'Your Olga's look is cold and dead,
As in some dull, Van Dyck madonna;
So round and fair of face is she,
She's like that stupid moon you see,
Up in that stupid sky you honour.'
Vladimir gave a curt reply
And let the conversation die.

Related Characters: Eugene Onegin, The Narrator (speaker), Vladimir Lensky, Olga Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is Eugene Onegin's reaction after listening to Vladimir Lensky tell him stories about Olga and Tatyana Larin. Lensky is in love with Olga and relates the story as if his love is an epic tale and she is legendarily beautiful. But although Eugene likes Lensky and is intrigued by his youthful passion for life, he nevertheless finds himself unconvinced by Lensky's descriptions of Olga. Even though he's never met Olga, Eugene refers to her as "cold and dead," comparing her to the moon, which is also "round" and "fair" like Olga but offers no warmth. He also compares Olga to a painting by Anthony van Dyck, perhaps suggesting that like a painting she is flat and lacks greater dimensions to her personality. This response clearly offends Lensky, who gives only a "curt reply."

Although this passage punctures Lensky's grand ideas about himself and Olga, it also shows the limits of Eugene. After all, Eugene criticizes Olga before he even meets her, showing how he is already jaded and expects the worst. Eugene ends up being proven true about the lack of depth to Lensky and Olga's relationship, but this passage nevertheless shows how coldhearted Eugene has become, unable to believe in romance like he did in his youth.

Time was, with grave and measured diction,
A fervent author used to show
The hero in his work of fiction
Endowed with bright perfection's glow.
He'd furnish his beloved child—
Forever hounded and reviled—
With tender soul and manly grace,
Intelligence and handsome face.
And nursing noble passion's rages,
The ever dauntless hero stood
Prepared to die for love of good;
And in the novel's final pages,
Deceitful vice was made to pay
And honest virtue won the day.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the narrator momentarily deviates from the main story to go off on a tangent about the history of storytelling. The narrator notes that older stories used to be more straightforward stories of good versus evil, where good was guaranteed to triumph at the end. In the narrator's present time, however, stories have more complicated, ambiguous morals. The heroes of these stories tend to have flaws, and good doesn't always triumph over evil in the end.

The narrator's views about storytelling have some truth to them—at the time of *Eugene Onegin*'s writing, novels in general were becoming more realistic and would continue in that direction after *Eugene Onegin*. Still, some of the narrator's claims are overly romantic, perhaps to the point that they become comical. Tragedies and stories with flawed protagonists have ancient roots, something the narrator should probably know, given his many references to ancient poems. What the narrator really seems to want isn't stories from the historical past but stories from his *own* past, when he was younger and presumably loved romances and fairy tales. Although the narrator presents himself as older and wiser than most of the characters in the poem, in many ways, he is himself susceptible to the same romantic ideas that Tatyana suffers from. This illustrates how even as people age, the romantic ideas of youth continue to have a strong appeal, regardless of whether or not they reflect reality. Moreover, the narrator's nostalgia for the stories of his youth point to his anxiety about aging and the passage of time in general.

I'm writing you this declaration—
What more can I in candour say?
It may be now your inclination
To scorn me and to turn away;
But if my hapless situation
Evokes some pity for my woe,
You won't abandon me, I know.

Related Characters: Tatyana Larin (speaker), Eugene Onegin, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 73

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is from Tatyana's love letter to Eugene, which she writes in French (a language that she knows better than Russian and feels is more appropriate for love letters) and sends to him in the mail. Tatyana's letter is very honest and open, as she herself notes in these opening lines. She acknowledges the possibility that Eugene may simply "scorn" her after receiving such an honest letter, but she clings on to the hope that perhaps he won't "abandon" her.

This letter presents Tatyana sympathetically, showing that while her decision to write a love letter to Eugene may be naïve and influenced by the romantic books she reads, at least she has some self-awareness about the situation and leaves open the possibility that Eugene might reject her. When Eugene rejects Tatyana, he takes a patronizing tone as if she doesn't understand what she's doing, and he needs to protect her. Because Tatyana's letter is honest and self-aware, Eugene's behavior comes off particularly badly. Although Tatyana's letter is a product of the fanciful romance books she has written, it is ultimately a testament to the capacity for poetry to awaken deep feelings within its audience, and also to the hope and potential of youth. On the other hand, Eugene's rejection of Tatyana's love is a testament to his own cynicism and incapability of feeling.

Chapter 4 Quotes

'You wrote to me. Do not deny it.
I've read your words and they evoke
My deep respect for your emotion,
Your trusting soul… and sweet devotion.
Your candour has a great appeal
And stirs in me, I won't conceal,
Long dormant feelings, scarce remembered.
But I've no wish to praise you now;
Let me repay you with a vow
As artless as the one you tendered;
Hear my confession too, I plead,
And judge me both by word and deed.'

Related Characters: Eugene Onegin (speaker), Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the beginning of Eugene's famous speech in which he rejects Tatyana, which is sometimes referred to as a "sermon" due to the heavy-handed way that he speaks to her. On the one hand, Eugene says several things in this quote to praise Tatyana. He notes her "trusting soul", her "sweet devotion," and her "candour," admitting that these qualities have stirred something within him. But despite this, Eugene says that his ultimate purpose is not to praise Tatyana but instead to make his own confession to her.

Eugene first begins to show his patronizing attitude toward Tatyana when he calls her love letter "artless." Part of the reason why Eugene seems to look down on Tatyana is

because her letter is an expression of genuine emotion, whereas Eugene himself is too jaded to allow himself to feel unfiltered emotions. Tatyana seems to embarrass Eugene, perhaps because she reminds him of how he used to be when he was young and idealistic himself. Eugene's speech is a pivotal moment in the story, marking the point at which his character rejects the possibility to change his life and instead digs deeper into the cynicism that has been growing in his character from the start.

> How oft have tearful poets chances
> To read their works before the glances
> Of those they love? Good sense declares
> That no reward on earth compares.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky, Tatyana Larin, Olga Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the narrator gushes about how wonderful it must feel for Vladimir Lensky to be able to read his poetry in person to his beloved, Olga Larin. At first, this passage might seem to be praising the power of poetry to connect people and allow them to express their feelings. While the novel does indeed sometimes showcase the power of poetry, this passage is also mocking Lensky. It suggests that Lensky is a bit of a narcissist who loves having an opportunity to read his poetry more than he actually loves Olga.

The Lensky's free-flowing poetry contrasts with Eugene's more logical and detached response to the love letter that Tatyana sent him. Although Lensky seems to like the sound of his own voice, there is nevertheless something truthful and passionate about his youthful enthusiasm that the older Eugene represses in his own life. The novel explores how both extremes have their pitfalls, suggesting that while there is value in passionate displays of emotion, too much emotion can lead a person to make irrational decisions in the heat of the moment—and as Lensky's death shows, these decisions can lead to tragic consequences.

> Oh, blest is he who lives believing,
> Who takes cold intellect for naught,
> Who rests within the heart's sweet places
> As does a drunk in sleep's embraces,
> Or as, more tenderly I'd say,
> A butterfly in blooms of May;
> But wretched he who's too far-sighted,
> Whose head is never fancy-stirred,
> Who hates all gestures, each warm word,
> As sentiments to be derided,
> Whose heart… experience has cooled
> And barred from being loved … or fooled!

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky, Tatyana Larin, Olga Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 106

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the narrator talks about how wonderful it is to give in to passion and how awful it is to be too practical to be able to feel passionate love. Although the narrator speaks in general terms, it's clear that he is referencing the extreme passion of Vladimir Lensky, who believes he's passionately in love with Olga, and the cold rationality of Eugene Onegin, who rejected the love of Tatyana for practical reasons.

Although this passage may seem to praise Lensky for choosing the happier life course, the narrator's perhaps ironic tone in this passage may also suggest his criticism of Lensky's unrestrained passion. For example, when the narrator suggests that people like Lensky "take cold intellect for naught," this could be a subtle way of calling them stupid and unintellectual. He goes on to compare people like Lensky to drunks falling asleep, suggesting that they don't know what they're doing.

Still, the narrator suggests that Eugene's approach to life isn't any better. Eugene's intellect may keep him from being "fooled" as easily as someone like Lensky, but it also makes him too hard-hearted to open himself up to love and happiness. The narrator's quote explores how finding satisfaction in love is a difficult, and perhaps at times even impossible feat to achieve, as it requires someone to be vulnerable and guarded at the same time.

Chapter 5 Quotes

Tatyana (with a Russian duty
That held her heart, she knew not why)
Profoundly loved, in its cold beauty,
The Russian winter passing by:
Crisp days when sunlit hoarfrost glimmers,
The sleighs, and rosy snow that shimmers
In sunset's glow, the murky light
That wraps about the Yuletide night.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 110

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes how as Tatyana still reels after receiving her rejection from Eugene, she tries to take solace in the Russian countryside that she grew up in and loves dearly. This passage connects Tatyana's relationship with nature to her sense of Russian identity. Appreciating the snowy natural landscape is a "Russian duty," according to the narrator, suggesting that this landscape plays an important part in shaping Russian culture and identity.

The narrator also refers specifically to the "Russian winter passing by" suggesting that the coldness and harshness of the winter season simultaneously reflects and shapes the emotional detachment or coldness that is, in the narrator's view, a distinct feature of Russian identity. Tatyana's love for Eugene, despite his cold indifference to her, then, symbolically reflects both her innate love for Russia and Russian culture, despite its fundamental harshness. Tatyana's ability to see beauty in the cold, snowy landscape in this scene also reflects how, at least at the beginning of the novel, she is able to remain hopeful despite the discouragements she faces.

Tatyana, in her low-cut gown,
Steps out of doors and trains a mirror
Upon the moon to bring it nearer;
But all that shows in her dark glass
Is just the trembling moon, alas....

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 113

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Tatyana tries to adjust her mirror so that the moon reflects in it. This is supposedly a divination tactic that will allow her to see her future husband. On the one hand, this passage seems to once again show Tatyana's naivety. Having been rejected by Eugene, she only falls deeper into her romantic fantasy, trying to use superstition to find an answer.

Although Tatyana's methods might be naïve, though, the "trembling moon" she sees does present an accurate picture of Tatyana's situation. The moon, which is cold and distant like the Russian landscape, could represent Tatyana's feelings after being rejected so coldly by Eugene. Mirrors typically hold the reflection of the person looking into them, and so in another sense, Tatyana herself is like the moon. Although she is full of youthful hope for now, when it comes time to marry, she will become colder and more distant in a way that resembles a different aspect of the moon.

But no, she can't. What explanation? ...
Well, she's just promised his good friend
The next dance too. In God's creation!
What's this he hears? Could she intend? ...
Can this be real? Scarce more than swaddler—
And turned coquette! A fickle toddler!
Already has she mastered guile,
Already learned to cheat and smile!
The blow has left poor Lensky shattered;
And cursing woman's crooked course,
He leaves abruptly, calls for horse,
And gallops off. Now nothing mattered—
A brace of pistols and a shot
Shall instantly decide his lot.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky, Tatyana Larin, Olga Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the fateful moment in the story when Eugene decides to dance with Olga, as a mischievous way to punish Lensky for forcing him to come to Tatyana's name

day celebration. Although the narrator is the one speaking, his words closely follow what Lensky must be thinking to himself as he watches his friend dance with his fiancée. At first, Lensky's only reaction is disbelief ("Can this be real?"). As things go on, however, Lensky's disbelief develops into anger as he "curs[es]" Olga and her "crooked course." Finally, Lensky takes things to the furthest extreme, going home to ready his pistols, foreshadowing his move to challenge Eugene to a duel.

This passage reflects how differently Eugene and Lensky see the world and how this inability to communicate with each other has tragic consequences. Lensky's rapid progression through emotions—from shock, to annoyance, to anger—shows how the youthful passions that have given him meaning and fulfillment can just as easily lead him astray. Lensky's capacity for emotion enabled his deep love for Olga and his friendship with Eugene, but that emotional vulnerability is what made their apparent betrayal hit just as hard. The final image of the pistols hints at the dark turn the story will take in the next chapter, and it also shows how the violent loves of youth can also sometimes lead to real violence.

Chapter 6 Quotes

Our Lensky's seat, there lived and thrived
In philosophical seclusion
(And does so still, have no illusion)
Zaretsky—once a rowdy clown,
Chief gambler and arch rake in town,
The tavern tribune and a liar—
But now a kind and simple soul
Who plays an unwed father's role,
A faithful friend, a peaceful squire,
And man of honour, nothing less:
Thus does our age its sins redress!

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky, Zaretsky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 134

Explanation and Analysis

This quote introduces the character of Lensky's friend Zaretsky, a roguish young man. Although Zaretsky and Lensky are both passionate young men full of life and energy, Zaretsky—a "rowdy clown"—seems to be just a little more reckless than his friend. In fact, Zaretsky is the "arch rake in town," suggesting his taste for drinking, gambling, and general debauchery. His influence on Lensky seems to be a bad one, as he encourages the violence and recklessness already lurking inside of the passionate Lensky.

The narrator humorously describes the rakish Zaretsky in terms that make him sound more honorable than he actually is. He calls him a "faithful friend" and a "peaceful squire," when in fact he is leading Lensky into a duel—and ultimately to his death. The narrator's ironic portrayal of Zaretsky as a positive influence of upstanding character serves as commentary on "our age," meaning the early 18th century, when the story takes place. The narrator is perhaps pointing to some of the negative consequences of the westernization Russian culture had undergone by the time of the book's writing, suggesting that the romanticism and focus on sensual pleasures Russia adopted from Western European culture have resulted in moral decay—in a generation that "redress[es]" its sins as fashionable behavior to aspire to.

'Approach at will!' Advancing coldly,
With quiet, firm, and measured tread,
Not aiming yet, the foes took boldly
The first four steps that lay ahead—
Four fateful steps. The space decreasing,
Onegin then, while still not ceasing
His slow advance, was first to raise
His pistol with a level gaze.
Five paces more, while Lensky waited
To close one eye and, only then,
To take his aim.... And that was when
Onegin fired! The hour fated
Has struck at last: the poet stops
And silently his pistol drops.

Related Characters: The Narrator, Zaretsky (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 146

Explanation and Analysis

This quote begins with a command from Zaretsky and moves into the final climactic scene of the duel between Eugene and Lensky. Eugene has been hesitant about the duel for this whole chapter, showing up late and appointing his French valet as his second, seemingly because he didn't consider whom to bring as a second when he first accepted the duel. Nevertheless, despite Eugene's hesitance, he is the

first to fire, and he ends up killing Lensky with his shot.

The duel between Eugene and Lensky is the culmination of an ongoing conflict in the novel between the passions of youth and jadedness of old age. By killing Lensky, Eugene also in a way kills his younger self, rejecting the youthly passions that Lensky represented. But while Eugene emerges victorious in the duel, his reward is in some ways more of a punishment—now he has to live for the rest of his days with the guilt of killing Lensky, haunted by thoughts of what the young Lensky may have one day become.

I've learned the voice of new desires
And come to know a new regret;
The first within me light no fires,
And I lament old sorrows yet.
O dreams! Where has your sweetness vanished?
And where has youth (glib rhyme) been banished?
Can it be true, its bloom has passed,
Has withered, withered now at last?
Can it be true, my heyday's ended—
All elegiac play aside—
That now indeed my spring has died
(As I in jest so oft pretended)?
And is there no return of youth?
Shall I be thirty soon, in truth?

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 153

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the narrator once again digresses from the main story to offer an aside about his own life. The narrator laments that he will soon turn 30, making him older than any of the main characters of the novel, like Eugene or Lensky. For the narrator, leaving youth behind is a sad occasion, and he regrets having to leave the "spring" of his life.

While not advancing the novel's central plot, the narrator's lamentations about aging connect back to the narrative thematically. The metaphorical death of the narrator's youth aligns with the literal death of Lensky, who represented the passion and potential of youth. This passage also reinforces how the narrator's perspective might be somewhat unreliable due to his own anxieties about aging. While the narrator praises youth and laments his own "withered" state, the story itself has shown the youth also has its downsides and that Lensky's death was at least partly a result of his own recklessness. In this light, then, narrator's nostalgia for his own lost youth inhibits him from reflecting on youth and aging objectively—his anxieties about growing old compel him to regard youth in an unreasonably positive light, which the tragedy of Lensky's death and the youthful passion that brought him to it calls into question.

Chapter 7 Quotes

And so, in slow but growing fashion,
my Tanya starts to understand,
More clearly now—thank God—her passion
And him for whom, by fate's command,
She'd been condemned to feel desire:
That dangerous and sad pariah,
That work of heaven or of hell,
That angel… and proud fiend as well.
What was he then? An imitation?
An empty phantom or a joke,
A Muscovite in Harold's cloak,
Compendium of affectation,
A lexicon of words in vogue …
Mere parody and just a rogue?

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 167

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Tatyana (sometimes shortened to "Tanya" in the poem) goes over to see the abandoned house in the Russian countryside where Eugene used to live. Tatyana feels nostalgic at first, seeing all the possessions that used to belong to him. She takes a particular interest in his books, trying to see if she can read anything in Eugene's old notes that might help her to discern who Eugene is on the inside—the true self he keeps hidden from the outside world.

But the more that Tatyana reads through Eugene's books, the more she's convinced that he is just "an empty phantom or a joke." While Tatyana got many of her own ideas about love from the romantic books that she's read, it takes her

until this moment for her to realize that in his own way, Eugene is also just a reflection of the different things that he's read. When she wonders if Eugene is simply "a lexicon of words in vogue," she suggests that Eugene is perhaps just trying to sound knowledgeable and mimic the language of things he's read and the ideas that language evokes. This passage is a crucial moment in Tatyana's development as a character, as she finally stops idolizing Eugene as a perfect man, instead seeing his flaws and beginning her own journey toward becoming a more mature (and perhaps also more cynical) adult.

"What *can* I do? Tatyana's grown,'
Dame Larin muttered with a moan.
'Her younger sister married neatly;
It's time that she were settled too,
I swear I don't know what to do;
She turns all offers down completely,
Just says: "I can't", then broods away,
And wanders through those woods all day.'

Related Characters: Dame Larin (speaker), Vladimir Lensky, Tatyana Larin, Olga Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 168

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Dame Larin thinks to herself about how now that Olga has gone off and married a lancer, it's time to find a husband for Tatyana—after Lensky, Olga's previous fiancé, died, it didn't take Olga long to move on to someone else, revealing the superficiality of her love for Lensky . Although Tatyana is only just beginning to see the world as an adult, Dame Larin is eager to marry her off, showing how important the issue of marriage was in Russian society and how women tended to marry—or were forced into marriage—at a young age.

Dame Larin herself had a bad experience with being forced into a marriage when she was young, and yet in spite of this, she still shows no regrets about trying to coerce Tatyana into marriage. This shows how as she aged, Dame Larin's values changed, and her attitude toward love and romance has become more cynical and rational. Although she may have longed for passion and romance as a young woman, as an adult, she has learned to value the social and economic stability a woman might attain by "marr[ying] neatly."

But roads are bad now in our nation;
Neglected bridges rot and fall;
Bedbugs and fleas at every station
Won't let the traveller sleep at all.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Tatyana Larin, Dame Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 172

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the narrator describes the roads of Russia as Tatyana and Dame Larin journey to Moscow for the winter, where they hope to find a husband for Tatyana. Although the countryside is beautiful, even when covered in snow that makes traveling difficult, the narrator is harsher when describing the state of the man-made structures in Russia.

The narrator describes Russian roads bluntly as "bad," noting that bridges are falling apart due to lack of care. Similarly, the stations along the way are also neglected and in shoddy condition, full of "bedbugs and fleas" that make it difficult for travelers to get the rest they need. While the narrator's complaints about Russian roads are literal, they also have moral significance. For the narrator, Russia's poorly maintained roads and stations reflect the metaphorical rot that Russia has underdone as it falls deeper under European influence and neglects its own. In contrast to these roads, the city of St. Petersburg—the cultural hub of Western influence in Russia—boasts lavish infrastructure and wealth.

The night has countless stars to light her,
And Moscow countless beauties too;
And yet the regal moon shines brighter
Than all her friends in heaven's blue;
And she, whose beauty I admire—
But dare not bother with my lyre—
Just like the moon upon her throne,
Mid wives and maidens shines alone.
With what celestial pride she grazes
The earth she walks, in splendour dressed!
What languor fills her lovely breast!
How sensuous her wondrous gazes! ...
But there, enough; have done at last:
You've paid your due to follies past.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky, Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 172

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the narrator describes how Tatyana tentatively takes her first steps into Moscow social life at a ball. Tatyana hasn't often been away from her home in a comparatively remote part of the Russian countryside, and she is overwhelmed by the festivities, sometimes impressed, other times disdainful and wishing to be home. As the narrator notes, although the balls of Moscow are full of lights as bright as stars, the moon is brighter than any star, and Tatyana is on her way to becoming like "the moon upon her throne." This passage is just one in which the narration compares Tatyana to the moon.

This passage celebrates how, while Tatyana was once withdrawn, she's now grown up into someone who can't help being the center of attention in Moscow's social world. The comparison between Tatyana and the moon connects the cycle of youth and aging to the waxing and waning moon, showing how both are inevitable patterns. As Lensky fades from memory and Eugene continues to slide into regret and cynicism, the blossoming of Tatyana balances out this cycle of life and death.

Chapter 8 Quotes

When one becomes the butt of rumour,
It's hard to bear (as you well know)
When men of reason and good humour
Perceive you as a freak on show,
Or as a sad and raving creature,
A monster of Satanic feature,
Or even Demon of my pen!
Eugene (to speak of him again),
Who'd killed his friend for satisfaction,
Who in an aimless, idle fix
Had reached the age of twenty-six,
Annoyed with leisure and inaction,
Without position, work, or wife—
Could find no purpose for his life.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Lensky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 190

Explanation and Analysis

This quote portrays Eugene in the year after he kills Lensky in a duel. Despite this life-changing event, Eugene remains "annoyed with leisure and inaction," which is essentially how he's felt since the first chapter, when he began to tire of St. Petersburg's social life. Rather than getting over Lensky's death or trying to improve himself, instead, Eugene has gotten tagged as "the butt of rumour" as people gossip about how he killed a friend for no good reason.

When the narrator describes Eugene as "without position, work, or wife" and with "no purpose for his life," he is not necessarily offering his own assessment but instead giving voice to the people who are gossiping about Eugene (although there is indeed some truth to this gossip). The people gossiping about Eugene imply that a job or a marriage would be a respectable way for Eugene to contribute to society and find a sense of meaning in his life, confirming that Eugene has continued to move aimlessly through life. This is especially tragic in light of Lensky's death. Because of Eugene, Lensky never had the chance to make anything of his life. It adds insult to injury that Eugene continues to waste his own life when he has robbed his friend of life, as well.

'And happiness was ours ... so nearly!
It came so close! ... But now my fate
Has been decreed. I may have merely
Been foolish when I failed to wait;
But mother with her lamentation
Implored me, and in resignation
(All futures seemed alike in woe)
I married.... Now I beg you, go!
I've faith in you and do not tremble;
I know that in your heart reside
Both honour and a manly pride.
I love you (why should I dissemble?);
But I am now another's wife,
And I'll be faithful all my life.'

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Tatyana Larin, The General

Related Themes:

Page Number: 212

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, which comes shortly after Tatyana marries the general and Eugene sees her again for the first time in years, Tatyana rejects the love letters that Eugene has been sending to her. This whole chapter, and particularly this quote, is a reversal of what happened earlier in the book, when Tatyana wrote a gushing love letter to Eugene, and he responded with a cold and analytical rejection speech.

Still, the similarities between Eugene's rejection speech and Tatyana's also helps reflect how the two characters differ. Tatyana, for example, is notably humbler in her rejection of Eugene. She doesn't put herself above Eugene, placing them on even ground with her remark that "happiness was nearly ours." She emphasizes the shared tragedy of their failed romance, rather than the singular foolishness of the object of her rejection. Moreover, Tatyana does not try to rationalize or deny her feelings, as Eugene did in his rejection speech. She says clearly "I love you," and then she explains that the only reason she rejects Eugene now is because she is already married and has vowed to be faithful. In her choice not to insult or speak badly to Eugene, Tatyana demonstrates the maturity she's achieved through age and experience. Although she has become more restrained in her passions, she is no less honest than she was as a girl.

> But those to whom, as friends and brothers,
> My first few stanzas I once read—
> 'Some are no more, and distant… others.'
> As Sadi long before us said.
> Without them my Onegin's fashioned.
> And she from whom I drew, impassioned,
> My fair Tatyana's noblest trait…
> Oh, much, too much you've stolen, Fate!
> But blest is he who rightly gauges
> The time to quit the feast and fly,
> Who never drained life's chalice dry,
> Nor read its novel's final pages;
> But all at once for good withdrew—
> As I from my Onegin do.

Related Characters: The Narrator (speaker), Eugene Onegin, Tatyana Larin

Related Themes:

Page Number: 212

Explanation and Analysis

This quote is the closing lines of the novel. Although both Eugene and Tatyana live to see the end of the novel, the ending is still tragic for a variety of reasons, as the two potential lovers part ways, seemingly for good. Nevertheless, despite this sad ending, the narrator takes a more upbeat tone as he considers the craft of poetry in his final lines. The narrator praises people who know how to leave a feast at the right time, suggesting that there is value in leaving some stories unfinished, and some questions unanswered. The narrator suggests that people who know when "to quit the feast and fly" are "blest," meaning that there is virtue to quitting when one is ahead and not pursuing one's passions to the end, which only ends in tragedy or disappointment. In leaving Eugene and Tatyana's story somewhat ambiguous, the narrator leaves open the possibility (however unlikely) that they may find happiness—if not together, then at least in their respective lives. Eugene's quest to regain some of the meaning and purpose he had lost with age, after all, is what led him even deeper into depression, causing him to kill his friend and lose out on love.

And so, while *Eugene Onegin*'s ending is fairly bleak for the titular character, the narrator adds a hopeful—or at least, not unambiguously hope*less*—tone by leaving Eugene's fate unwritten, suggesting that Eugene and the cold, jaded attitude he represents may one day go away and that he may one day achieve the wisdom and maturity that has thus far eluded him.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

The narrator introduces Eugene Onegin, a man who was born by the Neva River (in St. Petersburg, Russia) and who served in the military. His father threw extravagant parties and was often in debt. Eugene himself now has a reputation for being educated and knowing some Latin, but he can sometimes be "pedantic." He is bad at poetry and sometimes prefers reading prose **books** like those by Adam Smith.

The beginning of the novel introduces the main character of Eugene Onegin as a member of the upper class in Russia, but also as someone who isn't particularly exceptional. Adam Smith, whom Eugene likes to read, was a Scottish writer who wrote about economics—a mundane, emotionally detached subject that is arguably the opposite of poetry. This paints a picture of Eugene as someone who is educated but perhaps a bit emotionally withdrawn.

Perhaps Eugene's biggest interest is love. He thinks a lot about what to say and what to write to a potential beloved, and he often shows ingenuity, winning over women and defeating his rivals for their affection.

Eugene's interest in love contrasts with his more mundane and "pedantic" interests when it comes to education and reading. They reveal unexpected depth to his character, showing how he is not as passionless as he might first seem.

Some mornings, Eugene wakes up and has invitations to three different parties. He'll go out and spend the day making merry, eating lots of food and drinking lots of alcohol, then maybe going to see a new ballet. He finds the theater a particularly magical place, often arriving late and using the evening to search for women he hasn't met yet. Still, one evening when he's at the ballet, he gets tired of it all and decides to leave early.

This passage establishes Eugene as what might be called a dandy or even a libertine—that is, he is highly invested in fashion and style, and he enjoys sensual pleasures. The passage shows how life for the upper class in Russia in the early 18th century was full of leisure and pleasure, but it also shows how this constant leisure could become overwhelming and lead to a feeling of emptiness, which is what Eugene is beginning to experience.

Eugene likes collecting nice things from around the world, like fine china and perfumes. He dresses like a "fop," taking three hours to examine himself in the mirror. He wears such fancy types of clothes that they all have foreign names, not Russian ones.

This passage emphasizes Eugene's rejection of his Russian roots in favor of an identity grounded in Western culture. This reflects how Russia in general at this time was becoming increasingly open to European influence.

After returning from the ballet, Eugene arrives back at his home's gate. The narrator reflects on how he wasted much of his own youth chasing pleasure. He remembers his previous passions with women and how each seemed perfect at the time. He gets nostalgic for a while, then regrets it. Instead, he suggests that love is not worth all the praise and songs that it inspires.

This passage shows how, while the narrator isn't an active participant in the events of Eugene's life, he is nevertheless a character in his own right. The narrator's nostalgia for a past love introduces youth as one of the novel's main themes. Here, the narrator portrays youth as a period of one's life characterized passionate, tumultuous feelings.

Turning back to Eugene, the narrator describes how Eugene comes home exhausted in the evening after a day of revelry. The things that used to give Eugene pleasure, like beautiful women and champagne bottles, now just bore him. He comes down with an affliction that the English call "spleen" and Russians call "Russian soul" and considers killing himself, but instead he just wanders through life in a daze.

The concepts of "spleen" and "Russian soul" both have multiple meanings, but here they seem to specifically to refer to a general sense of dissatisfaction with life. Eugene's condition could also be seen as melancholy or ennui. This passage suggests that there are limits to how well earthly pleasures, like fancy parties and champagne, can sustain inner, spiritual happiness and fulfillment.


Late at night, Eugene locks himself in his den and tries to write, covering the emptiness in his soul by putting his own thoughts into other characters. Then he reads **books** by other writers and gets frustrated by how false or outdated everything is.

The novel explores how, while poetry and literature can help people better understand their emotions and the world in general, there are also limits to what a person can learn from a book. Eugene's frustration at not being able to find truth in books is both a sign of the limits of books but also a sign of how Eugene's dissatisfaction with life has made him cynical.

The narrator says that he actually first became friends with Eugene because both of them rejected worldly things in search of something more and were depressed. The narrator feels that anyone with the ability to feel is always trying to escape memories of the past. Still, the narrator found some solace in talking to Eugene, who despite being bitter was also frequently witty. They would drink together on quiet nights while the Neva sparkled.

By inserting himself into the story, the narrator blurs the lines between literature and reality. And by emphasizing the similarities between Eugene's melancholy and the narrator's own feelings, the narrator suggests that Eugene's feelings of existential woe are universal to the human experience.


Eugene and the narrator talked about traveling abroad together, but fate drove the two of them apart after Eugene's father died, leaving Eugene to deal with the many people who all want a share of the inheritance. Not long after, Eugene's rich uncle gets gravely ill. Eugene goes to see his uncle but arrives too late—by the time he gets there, his uncle has died. While others come from around the area for a funeral feast, Eugene himself prefers to walk through the woods and by the stream near his uncle's home, finding a temporary cure for the dissatisfaction he felt in St. Petersburg. But after two days, he wants to go back to the city.

The deaths of both Eugene's father and uncle mark a transition point in Eugene's life as he becomes the head of his family. In some ways this is a "lucky" occurrence for Eugene, who suddenly and unexpectedly comes into a lot of money he didn't have before. But the fact that this change ultimately does little to improve Eugene's mood further highlights the inability of material comforts to bring about true, lasting happiness.

The narrator himself has a deep love of the countryside and its peaceful, poetic qualities—he disagrees with Eugene that it loses its splendor after a while. The narrator thinks it's important to establish the differences between himself and Eugene—he wants it to be clear that he isn't like Lord Byron, doing thinly veiled self-portrait. The narrator admits that many previous poets have written about love, but he feels compelled to do so himself, having recently gone through a heartbreak. The narrator reflects on his progress so far, and he's proud of having completed a chapter about his hero. He expects critics will have things to say, but he personally wouldn't change a word.

Lord Byron was an English poet and one of the leading figures of the Romantic literary movement, which Pushkin himself is sometimes considered a part of. Byron was famous for writing poems about men who were passionate and talented but also self-destructive. Although Byron clearly seems to have influenced Pushkin's work, this passage also points to the ways Eugene differs from a Byronic hero. For instance, poem, he lacks the exaggerated romantic qualities of the typical Byronic hero.

CHAPTER 2

Although Eugene feels confined when visiting his deceased uncle's home, the narrator believes it was a beautiful, tranquil place in the country. His uncle, who used to be a squire, had a palatial home, but by this point, Eugene has become so "jaded" that he can't even appreciate the house he's inherited. Eugene takes over the property, which affects the lives of the peasants in the area, who are divided in how they feel about Eugene. As gossip spreads that Eugene is a strange man who drinks too much and doesn't respect the old ways, the general opinion starts to turn against him.

This story takes place during the time when the system of serfdom was still in place in Russia. This system, which was similar to slavery, means that for many of the peasants in the area, Eugene is not just a neighbor but a master—an authority figure they were legally required to obey. The fact that Eugene was popular in the city but is instantly disliked by the peasants shows how the two groups have different values and how the emptiness of Eugene's partying lifestyle becomes even more apparent outside his city social circle. It also represents a clashing of two cultures: the European culture of the city, and the traditional Russian culture of the country.

Meanwhile, another squire, Vladimir Lensky, also decides to return to his estate. Lensky is a free-spirited man with dark hair. He's about to turn 18. Unlike Eugene, he isn't depressed and still takes pleasure in friendship and romance, and he feels hopeful about life. Lensky seeks fame as a poet and proudly goes around singing about romance. Many families think that the dashing Lensky should marry their daughters, but he isn't eager to marry. Instead, he ends up getting to know Eugene. Eugene enjoys Lensky's passionate way of speaking, even though Eugene himself no longer feels that way.

Although Eugene feels that his life of leisure is empty and unfulfilling, in some ways his goal is not to find a new life purpose but instead to find a way to enjoy his old life again. This is why Lensky is so appealing to him—he embodies the passion and romanticism that Eugene lost with age and wishes to regain. As the novel goes on, it becomes clear that Lensky has his own flaws and doesn't always live up to his own high ideals, but his potential and his passion for life help Eugene to remember these feelings for himself.

Eugene and Lensky have long conversations about big topics like good and evil, but their favorite topic is past romances. Lensky goes into great detail about his past affairs. His first love was Olga Larin, whom he played with as a child and whom his parents wanted him to marry at one point. Olga also has an older sister, Tatyana Larin. Tatyana is shier but beautiful in her own way. Unlike Olga, Tatyana rarely joined the other girls in playing outside.

Lensky talks as if he's an expert on big topics like love, but as it turns out, he is inexperienced and still fixated on his first love, Olga. Although Lensky presents his love for Olga as a passionate love story, it is in fact a conventional match that their parents encourage. This passage thus emphasizes a link between youth, naivety, and idealism. Eugene is charmed by Lensky not because the youth is wise, but because he lives life with an idealism Eugene has lost as he's grown older and desperately longs to regain.

Tatyana liked to read fiction, including authors like Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rosseau. Her father, Dmitry Larin, didn't read but found it harmless enough. Tatyana's mother, Dame Larin, identified with Richardson's stories because when she married her husband, she was in love with someone else, but she ultimately came to be content with her husband. Despite her initial disappointment with her own marriage, Tatyana's mother eventually took pleasure in running a strict household. In spite of her sometimes-harsh personality, Tatyana's father loved her a lot.

Samuel Richardson was an English author who wrote popular novels like Pamela *and* Clarissa. *Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a French writer a philosopher, whose novel* Julie *was also widely read. Dame Larin's identification with Samuel Richardson seems to be a reference to the fact that many of his famous works, including* Pamela *and* Clarissa, *involve women forced into relationships with men they don't love.*

Dmitry Larin died suddenly while working, and many people mourned his death. Lensky in particular was distraught because it was Larin who had promised Olga in marriage to Lensky. Lensky wrote a mourning poem about him. The narrator laments at how fragile life is, saying that although in some sense it is "worthless," he would be sad to leave, particularly if he doesn't earn some measure of fame and have something to leave behind. He hopes that "some future dunce" will look at a portrait of him and say, "This was a poet, yes indeed!"

Dmitry Larin's death in the middle of the workday reflects the difficult and harshness of his life and his family's relatively low status. Although Lensky eulogizes Dmitry, his motives are selfish because what he's really grieving isn't Larin—it's his opportunity to marry Olga, which now seems to be in jeopardy. The narrator's aside about how he wants to achieve fame connects him to Lensky, who also wants to be a poet. Although the narrator is older and more cynical than Lensky, he has a poet's desire to be remembered for his art, and this shows how while Lensky's romanticism might sometimes seem naïve, there is also something universal about it.

CHAPTER 3

One day, after Eugene and Lensky have a conversation, Lensky leaves to spend the evening at the Larin house, where he often goes. Although they aren't rich, Lensky finds their pastoral life charming. Eugene suspects Lensky really just wants to see Olga, and he asks if he can come along to see this girl that Lensky has spoken so much about. Lensky invites Eugene to join him on his visit with the Larins that evening.

This novel explores the difference between stories and reality. Here, Eugene has a chance to see how the reality of the Larins matches up with Lensky's stories about them. Eugene's desire to cross that threshold and see the Larins for himself reflects his desire to engage with something real. Although the Larins are poor, to Eugene they represent something authentic that he can't find in either books or in his urban social circles.

Eugene and Lensky go to see the Larins, who warmly greet them. By the end of the evening, however, Eugene is starting to get bored. As Eugene talks with Lensky after the visit, he says he can't see the appeal of Olga and thinks that if he were the "poet" telling the story, he'd make Tatyana the romantic interest. He says that by contrast, Olga is just plain, pale, and empty, like the **moon**. Lensky gets a little offended, and the conversation ends.

This passage highlights the difference in how Eugene and Lensky view the world. Lensky is young and still superficial, so he believes that the beautiful Olga must be the better of the two sisters. But having already spent a lot of time chasing beauty in St. Petersburg, Eugene is more intrigued by Tatyana, whose unusual qualities only make her more attractive to Eugene—they appeal to his "Russian soul" in a way that Olga's superficial charm does not.

In the days after, people in the area gossip about Eugene showing up at the Larins. They joke that maybe Tatyana has finally found a man to marry. Tatyana herself is secretly excited by this gossip and begins to fall in love with Eugene. She begins to dream of him as she goes about her daily life. Thoughts of him make the romantic novels she reads even more intriguing. She imagines herself like the heroine of a **book**.

This passage is one of many that shows how gossip and expectations can influence people's actions. Rumors about Eugene and Tatyana's interest in each other soon become reality as Tatyana they push Tatyana to develop actual feelings for Eugene. This passage also shows how the inexperienced Tatyana gets her ideas about love from books she's read. This shows how books give can give a person's life meaning and excitement—but sometimes this can lead them to develop false expectations, which can result in disappointment and disillusionment.

The narrator comments on how stories used to be about perfect, noble heroes defeating evil, but now people just get bored by such simple stories. Now, young ladies prefer to read about darker heroes, like vampires or the romantic but egotistical men of Lord Byron's poems. The narrator muses that perhaps when he himself is older, he'll write a novel in the older style without any "grim details" that just focuses on love. It'll be a tender family story, and the narrator will use the kind of romantic language he hasn't used since his "fair mistress" departed him.

*The narrator's comments about stories reflect real literary history—*Eugene Onegin *came at a turning point in literature when realism and flawed protagonists were becoming more fashionable. The narrator's preference for older, simpler narrative conventions underscores his nostalgia for the past and for his youth. Still, in some ways, the narrator's reasoning is also flawed and overly romantic—he seems to want to see the world in terms of straightforward conflicts of good and evil, when in reality, life is rarely so simple.*

The narrator laments that Tatyana is doomed to die someday, but he hopes that she at least gets to experience the best of life first. She is flushed with emotion as she continues to think about Eugene throughout her days. One night she sleeps fitfully and eventually wakes up to get her nurse. She asks her nurse if she herself ever fell in love back in the day and what it was like.

The narrator's reflection on Tatyana's life and eventual death reflect how, in spite of the narrator's love of simple, romantic stories, he is also aware of mortality and the darker side of life. Tatyana's fitful sleeping shows how her love for Eugene is so strong that it has physical effects on her, manifesting as symptoms of physical illness.

The nurse tells Tatyana a story about how she married her husband, Danny, even though she didn't really love him. She was only 13, and he was even younger. The harshness of the nurse's life upsets Tatyana. The nurse thinks Tatyana is ill, but Tatyana explains that actually, she's in love. She reassures her nurse that she's alright and asks to be alone.

Although Tatyana suffers due to her unrequited love for Eugene, the nurse helps her understand that some people face even more difficult situations when it comes to marriage. The nurse's situation demonstrates how little influence many lower-class women had over their lives, even for major decisions like marriage.

The narrator has known beautiful women who keep others at a distance. They scare men off by being stern, then find ways to win them back. Tatyana, however, has no interest in playing these kinds of games. Her love is trusting and innocent. She decides to write a letter to Eugene, writing in French, which she can write in better than her native Russian. The narrator agrees with her that Russian isn't a very good language for love letters. He doesn't mind when young ladies make grammar mistakes in their writing and even finds it charming.

Although the narrator criticizes women who keep their distance, in some ways he is also subtly making fun of Tatyana by suggesting that she doesn't know the proper way to go about trying to court someone. At the same time, however, the narrator raises the question of why Tatyana's direct approach is so unusual and why people are rarely honest and straightforward in love. Tatyana's preference for French is yet further evidence of how much European culture has come to influence Russian culture and identity during this time period.

The narrator has gotten possession of Tatyana's letter to Eugene and still cherishes it. In the letter, Tatyana confesses her love for Eugene and says she's always thinking about him, even in her dreams. She wonders if he is her "salvation," or if he was simply sent to tempt her. She ends by saying that if he'll pledge his honor, she will be faithful to him. After finishing the letter, Tatyana is nervous about sending it and delays sealing it. At last, she asks her nurse to deliver it for her. The nurse is confused about whom to deliver it to but eventually agrees.

The love that Tatyana offers to Eugene is pure and uncomplicated. She is honest about her feelings and pledges to be faithful to Eugene if he agrees to do the same. In many ways, Tatyana's straightforwardness and enthusiasm is similar to Lensky's, showing how youth is a time of enthusiasm and hope. Still, Tatyana hesitates to send the letter after writing it, and this suggests her heightened awareness of the complications of love and the dangers of being vulnerable.

A couple days pass, and Tatyana hears nothing. One day, Lensky comes alone to see Olga. She asks about Eugene, and Lensky says Eugene is probably too busy with his mail to visit. Tatyana blushes and feels ashamed, believing she's at fault for his absence. They all take tea, but Tatyana continues to think about Eugene.

Although Tatyana expressed her feelings directly in a letter, the initial response that Eugene gives is far less direct. He mentions only to Lensky that he is busy with his mail, which seems to hint that he is staying away because he received Tatyana's letter and is putting off the uncomfortable act of officially turning her down. Eugene's avoidance of her teaches Tatyana about the heartbreak of rejection and the potential consequences of communicating too openly about her feelings.

When Tatyana hears hoofbeats, she rushes out hoping to see Eugene and trips. But she doesn't see or hear him. Instead, she hears some serf girls singing a romantic song as they pick berries. Eventually, Tatyana picks herself up off the ground and starts heading back. But just as she does, she sees Eugene standing, waiting. The narrator says he's too tired at the moment to describe their meeting, but after a bit of a rest, he'll be ready to tell everything.

Tatyana's excited running and falling shows how she has become so emotional that she is barely in control of her body. Her physical fall foreshadows a different type of fall that she will experience in the next chapter after Eugene finally gives her a response to her love letter.

CHAPTER 4

The narrator believes it's easier to woo a woman one doesn't actually love. He finds the whole ritual of courtship exhausting. Eugene used to feel the same way. At one point, Eugene stopped feeling romantic attraction altogether, but Tatyana's letter stirred something in him. Now, in the present as Eugene stands outside Tatyana's house, he gives her a speech that begins with how much the letter moved him.

Although the narrator spoke fondly of romance in previous chapters, as he goes on, he becomes more cynical and exhausted, reflecting how many of the characters themselves feel as the novel progresses. Still, Eugene's ability to be moved by Tatyana's letter is a sign that this cynicism may not be permanent and that it may still be possible to feel the passions of youth again, at least momentarily.

Eugene continues his speech, telling Tatyana that he'd marry her if he were looking to marry someone, but marriage isn't in the future for him. He knows he'd be a bad husband. Although he loves her, he feels it's better for both their sakes if he's more like a brother and she learns to love someone else. Tatyana listens breathlessly in tears, then just silently bows and leaves at the end.

In his speech to Tatyana, which is one of the most famous parts of the novel, Eugene rejects his emotions, which were stirred by Tatyana's letter, and instead focuses on the logical. He believes that he would be a bad husband for Tatyana, and so he reasons that any relationship between the two of them would be futile and not worth pursuing for any amount of time. Although Eugene presents himself as doing a noble, selfless thing, this passage raises the question of whether he's deluding himself or even getting self-righteous about his stoic rejection of Tatyana, as he lectures her without considering her perspective.

Although the narrator thinks Eugene did the right thing, other people gossiping in the area look down on Eugene for rejecting Tatyana. The narrator believes that sometimes friends are the cruelest people of all when it comes to spreading gossip. The narrator goes on to say that it's always dangerous when choosing whom to love—the safest option is to just choose oneself rather than making potentially futile efforts to love someone else.

Although the narrator is sympathetic to Eugene's decision to reject Tatyana, this passage presents the narrator as potential unreliable. His comments about how a person should only love themselves contradict his earlier statements about love, and they also contradict the events of the novel, since Eugene ultimately comes to regret his solitary existence. In this light, the narrator's comments read as a flimsy defense mechanism he has enacted to justify and feel better about his own regrets in life and in love.

Tatyana become pale and weak after her meeting with Eugene. Meanwhile, Lensky continues to fall more in love with Olga. They spend a lot of time together, and when he's alone, he creates paintings and poems for her. His writing seems to just flow out of him because it's motivated by true love. He particularly enjoys reading his work aloud to Olga, who listens with interest, although the narrator warns that sometimes when a person seems to be in love, they aren't always thinking of you. The narrator himself likes to read his own writing aloud to random people in his life like his neighbors or guests at dinners.

Tatyana's paleness continues the representation of love and lovesickness as a physical disease. Meanwhile, Lensky's love for Olga seems on the surface to be a perfect situation. Based on the narrator's commentary, however, it's clear that the relationship may not be as ideal as it seems. The narrator suggests that perhaps Lensky loves hearing his own voice more than he loves Olga—and that Olga likes the idea of romance more than she loves Lensky in particular. Given this, it seems that both characters are trying to act out romanticized scenarios they have gleaned from literature, rather than acting on their genuine emotions.

The narrator turns his attention back to Eugene. He gets into a routine for the summer of waking up at the same time every day and going for a sim in the local stream. He takes long walks across the property and doesn't pay much attention to any of the people living in town. When it becomes winter, however, Eugene has a more difficult time enjoying the pleasures of nature. He becomes lazy, and his only entertainment is playing a version of billiards with himself.

The solitary life that Eugene spends in the country contrasts sharply with the busy social calendar that he used to keep when he was living back in St. Petersburg. At first, this seems to have a healing effect on him, as nature provides him with something more fulfilling than the social life he used to have. As time goes on, however, Eugene becomes increasingly frustrated by his solitary life, showing how as much as Eugene's life earlier was empty, his current escape to the country is just a way to run away from his problems rather than address them.

One day that winter, Lensky comes to dinner with Eugene. They talk until the fire in Eugene's home starts to go out. Eugene asks about Olga and Tatyana, and Lensky says the family is doing well, and he goes on about Olga's good qualities. Suddenly, he remembers that he was supposed to tell Lensky that he is invited to come to their house next week. It's Tatyana's name day celebration, and Lensky insists Eugene must come. Lensky reveals that he's marrying Olga in two weeks. The narrator warns that Lensky hasn't yet imagined how boring married life can be.

A name day is a Christian holiday a person celebrates on a day associated with the saint or Biblical figure who shares their name. Lensky is well aware of the situation between Eugene and Tatyana, having made the reference earlier to how Eugene was busy with his mail, and so he invites Eugene to the name day celebration knowing that tension. The narrator's warning to Lensky is another sign of the narrator's cynicism and a sign of how, despite his protestations, the narrator does indeed have much in common with Eugene.

CHAPTER 5

Meanwhile, Tatyana finds winter a cheerful time of year when everything glows with silver snow. She particularly loves traditions around Christmas, including the folklore and superstitions. She also believes in the power of dreams and cards to predict the future, and she sees shooting stars as omens. One of the prophecy games that she plays during the Yuletide season foretells a death to come soon.

Tatyana's belief in superstitions points to her desire for clear, unambiguous answers to the conflicts of her life. In this regard, she has much in common with many of the other characters who turn to literature for insight into love, romance, and the meaning of life in general. The death prophecy she encounters is a dark omen that may foreshadow at a literal death to come, or perhaps a metaphorical death, like the death of Tatyana's (or another character's) youthful idealism.

One dark night, Tatyana tries unsuccessfully to use the **moon** and a mirror to divine the face of her future husband. That night she dreams about trying to cross a shaky bridge over a chasm. She reaches out for help but instead finds a bear coming after her. She runs, making it across the bridge into the woods until she can't run anymore. The bear finds her, picks her up, and takes her back to his hut. He speaks and invites her to warm herself inside his place.

Eugene compared Olga to the moon earlier, noting that both are beautiful, but also cold and distant. Although Tatyana thinks her divination wasn't successful, in some ways the moon's coldness predicts the eventual coldness of her own marriage in the final chapter. Tatyana's strange dream of being chased by a bear over a shaky bridge reflects her new reservations about loving so openly and vulnerably. Eugene's rejection has taught her the dangers of wearing her heart on her sleeve. The bear, which alternates between fearsome and caring, seems to represent Eugene.

When Tatyana wakes up, she realizes she's in a hall somewhere outside a feast, and she doesn't see any bear around. Tatyana peeks inside at the feast and sees all sorts of strange monsters like a dog with horns, a skeleton, and a crab sitting on a spider. She is even more surprised when she notices Eugene sitting among all the monsters, entertaining them and drinking with them. Tatyana opens the door a little wider, and Eugene sees her.

Although Tatyana wakes up in this section, the monsters that she sees make it clear that she is still very much in a dream. The image of Eugene among the monsters suggests that there is something monstrous about him deep inside, despite his ordinary external appearance. This shows how Tatyana is beginning to see through the idealized, romantic version of Eugene that she once worshipped.

Eugene opens the door wider, and all the monsters seem to stare at Tatyana, who wants to run away but feels too weak. "She's mine!" says Eugene, and the monsters leave. Eugene takes Tatyana to a corner of the room and rests his head on her shoulder. Just then, Olga and Lensky enter the room. They argue with Eugene, getting more intense, until eventually Eugene strikes down Lensky with a knife. Lensky's cry sends a shiver down Tatyana's spine, and with that she wakes up from the dream, in her bedroom again.

Eugene's attack on Lensky with a knife foreshadows a conflict that will soon arise between the two men. The monsters and Eugene's knife attack symbolize the violence lurking beneath the "civilized" veneer of westernized society, which presents itself as courtly and elegant but is in fact no less harsh or violent than the Russian culture it has replaced. The dream seems at first to give Tatyana what she wants—for Eugene to love her—before abruptly tearing it away from her. This reflects how so many characters in the novel chase things that they think they want, only to end up disillusioned and disappointed.

Tatyana tries to look up the meaning of her dream in a **book**. She feels like the dream has sent her a message, and it disturbs her not to know what the message is. But the dream interpretation book she reads doesn't help, and she's troubled by the dream for many days.

Just as Tatyana tried to understand romance based on romance novels, now she turns to books to understand her dreams. Tatyana's inability to find a clear answer in the book reflects how, while books can sometimes broaden a person's perspective of the world, they are not magic decoders that reveal secrets of life. Ultimately, only the experience of living can provide these answers, and they're often less straightforward and unambiguous than people would like them to be.

Eventually, the day of Tatyana's name-day feast arrives. Relatives and neighbors all come to celebrate, even the narrator's cousin. Everyone is excited, having heard there will be a ball in the evening. Amid the celebrations at dinner, Lensky and Eugene arrive. Tatyana turns "paler than the **moon** at dawn" when Lensky and Eugene are seated across the table from her. Eugene notices Tatyana trembling, and at this point, he is just annoyed by her and angry at Lensky for forcing him to come, particularly because Lensky downplayed how many people would be at the event. Everyone else is too busy eating to notice how Tatyana feels.

This passage shows how even at a celebration in Tatyana's honor, people still ignore her feelings and desires—nobody cares (or thinks to care) that Eugene's presence at the party might make her uncomfortable, for instance. Although Eugene was once moved by Tatyana's affection for him, it's now just an annoyance to him. Ironically, while Eugene is tired of the rituals of European upper-class social life, he also gets mad at Tatyana because her straightforward, honest love letter to him broke from the prescribed social norms that govern rituals of (Western) courtship. and showed her ignorance of social customs. And so, Eugene is in a bind, unhappy with the superficiality of social conventions but also unhappy when they're disrupted, reflecting a paradox of life in Russia at the time. In a broader sense, Eugene's conflicted attitude toward Tatyana's frankness reflects his (and perhaps Pushkin's, as well) feeling torn between the new European culture of St. Petersburg and the old Russian way of life he experiences in the country.

At the dinner, a man named Triquet stands up and starts to sing something he wrote in Tatyana's honor. Afterward, when it's time for everyone to wish Tatyana well on her day, Eugene takes pity on her and speaks sincerely, which reawakens Tatyana's interest in him. Then everyone pushes back the chairs to make space to dance, and musicians start to play.

Although Triquet is supposedly honoring Tatyana, this passage makes it clear that he is really just trying to earn glory for himself by singing in public. This is similar to how the narrator mentioned that when Lensky recites poetry for Olga, he does so sometimes for the pleasure of hearing his own voice. In both cases, the narration points to the fundamental superficiality of courtship and of social norms in general.

The narrator says the ball is so glorious that his words can't do it justice. Feeling mischievous and still annoyed that he had to come to the party, Eugene asks Olga to dance. Lensky can't believe what he's seeing. Eugene dances so well that he makes Olga blush. Lensky becomes angry and jealous. When Eugene and Olga keep dancing together, Lensky at last leaves the party and rides off to get pistols for a duel.

Eugene's casual (if calculated) decision to dance with Olga to make Lensky jealous ends up having massive consequences for the rest of the novel, as it's implied that Lensky has decided to challenge Eugene to a duel in retaliation. This passage underscores the dangers of getting too carried away with passion. It also points to yet another negative outcome of Europe's influence on Russia: the duel, a tradition that came to Russia by way of Western Europe in the 17th century.

CHAPTER 6

Eugene feels pleased with himself at how he got "revenge" on Lensky by dancing with Olga. Olga, however, now can't stop thinking about Eugene. The evening ends and everyone goes to bed. Everything in the house is still, although Tatyana is lying awake, disturbed by Eugene's sudden reappearance and wondering what to make of his dancing with Olga. She wonders whether it would be better to die, since Eugene can't give her the happiness she needs to stay alive.

Eugene's satisfaction with himself for dancing with Olga shows how he is selfish, unable to consider how Tatyana, Olga, and Lensky might feel about his actions. His happiness at having bested Lensky represents his reclaimed youth, if only symbolically. Tatyana's thoughts of death are exaggerated and melodramatic, emphasizing how despite her growing disillusionment with love and romance, her youthful passion still dictates many of her thoughts and feelings.

The narrator wants to introduce a new character: Zaretsky, who is known as a rowdy gambler but who is also Lensky's faithful friend. Zaretsky is an expert with a pistol and also a clever talker, although he often gets too drunk for his own good. Eugene knows and likes Zaretsky, and he's surprised when, the morning after the party, Zaretsky shows up to see him. Zaretsky solemnly hands Eugene a note calling him out to a duel with Lensky. Eugene accepts, and Zaretsky returns to Lensky to deliver the news.

Zaretsky represents the passion of youth—he thoughtlessly encourages Lensky to challenge Eugene to a deal, not bothering to weight the potential consequences of engaging in such a dangerous, brutal ritual. In youth, one has more passion—but also more to lose, should one pursue one's passions too far. Eugene has had more life than Lensky, and although his death in the duel would be tragic, it would be far more tragic for Lensky to die before his life has hardly begun.

Eugene realizes that he was wrong to take Lensky and Olga's relationship so lightly, and he doesn't blame Lensky for being angry. Meanwhile, Lensky waits impatiently for Zaretsky to return with the news. He goes to see Olga and is surprised to see that she is acting as carefree as always, as if nothing has changed. He finds all of his jealousy and anger going away, even though a part of him still suspects that Olga loves Eugene more than she loves Lensky. He doesn't tell Olga about his feud with Eugene, but he still makes plans to go ahead with the duel, to make sure that Olga isn't "corrupted" by Eugene's false promises. Tatyana, meanwhile, can sense that something is wrong between Eugene and Lensky, but she doesn't know how serious it is.

Eugene begins to realize the error of his actions but still doesn't change his behavior. Similarly, Lensky has his own doubts about going ahead with the duel. But rather than calling off the duel and accepting an apology from Eugene, Lensky instead tries to find reasons to go ahead with the duel. He senses that Olga's love for him might not be as strong as he once thought, but he nevertheless uses protecting her as a justification for why to go ahead with fighting Eugene. He pictures himself as a romantic hero protecting Olga's virtue, echoing how many other characters in the novel confuse themselves by identifying with romance stories.

That evening, Olga and Lensky play the clavichord together, but she can tell something is preoccupying him. He refuses to tell her what's on his mind, then goes home to inspect his pistols for the duel the next day. He writes a poem about the uncertainty he feels as he prepares to face Eugene in a duel, lamenting what a good friend Eugene used to be. When he finishes, he's exhausted and sleeps until it's time to go to the duel.

Rather than discussing his doubts about the duel with Olga, Lensky remains silent. This is yet another example in the story of how a failure to communicate leads to negative consequences. Lensky's choice to write a poem about the duel shows that he's still not taking it as seriously as he ought to, romanticizing Eugene's betrayal using the conventions of poetry and ignoring the very real possibility that the duel will end with one of them dead.

Eugene sleeps deeply the night before the duel. He wakes up late the following morning and has to get dressed quickly. He rides off to the appointed meeting spot, where Lensky and Zaretsky are already waiting. Zaretsky asks Eugene why he showed up without a second. Eugene says that Guillot, his French valet who brought him to the duel, will act as his second. The two duelists prepare to fight.

Dueling was technically prohibited in Russia at this time, but it was still widespread, with a long tradition and established rules. One common rule of dueling is that a duelist is accompanied and assisted by a trusted assistant known as a second. Typically, the second is a fellow gentleman. Eugene's decision to select his valet as his second therefore breaks with tradition. On the one hand, Eugene's choice might simply reflect his lack of preparation for the duel. On the other hand, it might serve as a symbolic gesture on Eugene's part to signal to Lensky that he has no desire to go through with the brutal social ritual Lensky has imposed on him.

The narrator laments at how fate has turned the former friends Eugene and Lensky into enemies. The men load their pistols, and Zaretsky measures out the distance of 30 paces for the duel. He leads each duelist to where he should stand. The duel begins, and each man is hesitant to aim and fire at first. Eventually, Eugene aims and fires first.

The duel is a culmination of the mutual failure of Eugene and Lensky to communicate with each other. Their failure to understand each other suggests that sometimes it isn't possible to bridge the gap between youthful passion (Lensky) and jaded world-weariness (Eugene)—only time and experience can compel a person to abandon their idealism and take life seriously. Although both men are hesitant to fire, Eugene ultimately does, showing how the circumstances have forced the two men into a heightened conflict.

Lensky drops his pistol and has a look of shock on his face. Eugene is also shocked and runs to Lensky calling out his name, but he doesn't respond. Lensky is dead and lies still with blood flowing out of him. The narrator remarks that it's a lot more satisfying to kill an enemy at a distance than to see what one has done up close. It's even worse if one kills a young friend over one night's rash decision. Zaretsky confirms that Lensky is dead, and Eugene rides off in a hurry back home.

Eugene's killing of Lensky represents the culmination of the gradual breakdown of the men's friendship. By killing Lensky, Eugene rejects his former friend and the youthly passions that he represented, causing him to sink further into regret and cynicism. Eugene was initially drawn to Lensky because of Lensky's youth, perhaps hoping to regain some of his own youth by association. Ultimately, however, the arc of the friendship has only heightened Eugene's world weariness: now he must carry on his shoulders his guilt over the death of his friend.

The narrator notes how tragic it is that Lensky died so young. He wonders whether Lensky may have gone on to achieve some sort of fame, perhaps as a poet, if he'd lived longer, but now that will never happen. Or maybe Lensky was fated to give up poetry and live a quiet life as a married man, being happy but cuckolded, eating too much, getting gout at age 40, and eventually passing away in his bed surrounded by children.

Although the narrator waxes poetic at first about the great things that Lensky might have accomplished, as the passage goes on, it starts to become clear that the narrator doesn't actually think that Lensky would have achieved any particular fame. Nevertheless, while the narrator imagines a flawed and unremarkable life for Lensky, he still points to the underlying tragedy of Lensky's life cut short.


In the future, people will eventually come by the inscription on Lensky's grave and perhaps be moved for a moment or two. The narrator wants to tell what became of Eugene, but he says that he is getting tired for the moment and needs a rest. The narrator regrets that he has entered the "afternoon" of life and no longer has the youthful vigor that he used to.

The narrator's own exhaustion at telling the story and his repeated complaints about aging reinforce the novel's focus on the glorification of youth and the anxiety of aging. The narrator's note about how, despite Lensky's ambition, people will barely stop to think about him, reflects how fleeting life is—it is not as romantic as the great stories of literature would lead one to believe.

CHAPTER 7

Springtime comes, and nature begins to renew itself. Still, the narrator can't help but feel saddened this particular spring. Eugene has left the country home where he once lived. The only trace of him that remains is a simple gravestone for Lensky between two pine trees. Olga mourned Lensky, although not for as long as the narrator would've liked, and she now loves someone new, a lancer. When this new lancer gets called to battle, Olga marries him and heads off with him. Tatyana is too numb at this point to cry when Olga leaves.

Olga's quick recovery from mourning Lensky reflects how fickle love can be. It further reinforces the reality that Lensky died for nothing, since his whole justification for the duel in the moments leading up to it was that he had to protect Olga from being "corrupted" by Eugene. Ultimately, Lensky's youthful glorification of stories, his inflated self-importance, and his exaggerated passion led to his demise. Olga's swift marriage to the lancer reveals the superficiality of her former love for Lensky, which was more performance than a reflection of her genuine feelings. Tatyana's numbness, in contrast, reflects the sincerity of her love for Eugene, however misguided that love might have been.

One evening, Tatyana walks alone by the river. All of a sudden, she sees the light on near Eugene's manor. She debates whether to approach and eventually does. But the light is just from a nearby servant's house. Tatyana gets a key from a servant to look at Eugene's empty house. She feels nostalgic, seeing items in the house that Eugene used to use, then finally she heads home because it's dark.

The emptiness of Eugene's home reflects how he himself has become empty after the death of Lensky. Eugene tried to find a purpose in life beyond his socializing in St. Petersburg, and his friendship with Lensky might have given him a path toward the genuine connection and meaning he was so sorely lacking in life. But by turning on Lensky and rejecting human connection, going through with the social ritual of the duel. Instead, Eugene has effectively doomed himself to a life of empty dissatisfaction, as Tatyana sees as she goes through his old house.

The next morning, Tatyana returns to Eugene's empty house. Although Eugene had mostly given up on reading, he still kept a few **books** around. Tatyana opens them up and finds creases and writing on certain pages that show which parts Eugene reacted to. She hopes somewhere in these books, she'll be able to solve the mystery of what type of person Eugene is—or if he's an empty person who has just pieced himself together from scraps of things he's read. Meanwhile, Dame Larin begins to plan on trying to marry Tatyana off. Tatyana has been so distracted lately that her mother wonders if she's in love with someone. Tatyana has also been turning down marriage offers.

Books could have been something that brought Tatyana and Eugene together, but instead the romantic ideas they gleaned from books only drove them apart. This passage shows how as much as Eugene likes to think of himself as wiser and more experienced than Tatyana, his worldview—shaped by reading more than experience—has given him no advantage over Tatyana in terms of wisdom, despite his older age. Tatyana's first visit to Eugene's house was full of nostalgia, but during her second visit, she begins to see how she romanticized Eugene and failed to see him as he truly was. She let her passion lead her astray and blind her to the truth. Newly disillusioned, she resigns herself to listen to her mother's advice and think about getting married, even if future marriage is one of convenience rather than love.

It's summer now, and Dame Larin decides to have the family spend the winter in Moscow, where it will be easier to find someone for Tatyana to marry. Tatyana fears how people will judge her there for her simple country ways. She spends the rest of the summer saying goodbye to her beloved countryside until at last the day to depart for Moscow comes. Her family packs up everything in an old coach and heads off.

Tatyana's journey from the country to the city is the opposite of Eugene's. Although for Eugene the countryside ultimately bored him and had little to offer, Tatyana's reluctant goodbye to the country shows how important nature is to her, as well as hinting how sheltered her life has been so far.

The narrator looks forward to some day in the future when Russia's roads are less decrepit. Now, they're full of rotting bridges and resting stations full of fleas and bedbugs. Travel in the winter is slow, and it takes the Larins seven days to reach Moscow. The narrator takes pride in Moscow, which is an important city to every Russian and which never fell to Napoleon during the war.

The narrator's remarks about the poor state of the roads in Russia reflect his conflicted feelings about the country itself. Clearly, the run-down roads disappoint the narrator and, in many ways, his view of his home country is negative, something that is also reflected in his commentary on the actions of characters like Eugene and Lensky. Still, the narrator has pride in Moscow, which represents a side of the country not yet under the influence of Western culture to the degree that St. Petersburg is. He dreams of a future when the roads are better—when Russia redirects its focus back toward its cultural roots. The implication here is that in its enthusiasm to embrace Western tradition, Russia has let its own culture deteriorate—and it will continue to rot unless the country reassesses its priorities.

Two old women who are cousins of Dame Larin greet the family in Moscow and are happy to see Tatyana. More older relatives, including great aunts and uncles, also live in Moscow, and they all comment on how big Tatyana has gotten since the last time they saw her. Her younger relatives, meanwhile, examine her quietly and seem to find her and her country ways strange. But eventually, they accept her as a friend.

This passage further explores generational difference. Whereas Tatyana's older relatives see only her physical growth—she's bigger than she was when she saw them last—her younger relatives sense a spiritual change in Tatyana, one brought about by her time in the country. The older generation's observations emphasize the passage of time, and perhaps their own anxieties about aging. Meanwhile, the youth—for whom aging does not yet register as a concern—are more preoccupied with superficial aspects of Tatyana, like her mannerisms and lack of decorum.

Tatyana is in a daze and struggles to take part in the conversations and gossip happening around her at her new home in Moscow. One day, they take Tatyana to a Moscow club for nobles called the Grand Assembly, where music plays and where many women are searching for a husband. Although it's a merry atmosphere, Tatyana begins to hate this new world that she is forced to take part in, feeling cramped without the freedom that comes with being out in the country.

Tatyana's experience of being taken in by the splendor of big city social life, only to later begin to find it oppressive, reflects Eugene's own experience of getting older in the city. Like Eugene, Tatyana feels that the celebratory social events are an obligation rather than something to enjoy. This reinforces the superficiality of social customs and material pleasures. For people like Tatyana, whose upbringing in the country has given her a richer spiritual life, life in the city is markedly vapid and meaningless.

Tatyana gets lost in her own thoughts at the noisy club. But then her aunts come over to her and point out a large man dressed as a general who seems to have taken an interest in Tatyana.

Olga's sister married a military man (a lancer). The appearance of this general suggests that as the chapter ends, Tatyana faces a crucial decision point in her life: she can either settle down with a sensible husband like her sister did, or she can maintain her youthful idealism and try to search for real connection.

CHAPTER 8

The narrator remembers reading Latin classics as a student. Back then, romance was the most important thing to him, and he saw passion as his own personal version of a Muse. Eventually, the narrator began to tire of the city and feel drawn to the countryside. Now, however, the narrator's poetic Muse has led his attention back to the city, to a party in St. Petersburg where the narrator is surprised to see Eugene, a couple years after he left the countryside. The narrator wonders whether Eugene has changed at all in the time that's passed since Lensky's death or if he's the same person.

For the final chapter, the narrative returns to St. Petersburg, where the story began. The narrator's reflections about Latin classics are relevant because, as a long story told in poetic verse, Eugene Onegin *takes inspiration from Greek and Latin classics like* The Iliad, The Odyssey, *and* The Aeneid. *In some ways, the narrator's references to these classics are humorous, because the narrator's own stories about his past romances and about Eugene's life are relatively mundane compared to the epic stories of past poems.*

The narrator thinks it isn't right to scorn Eugene, who isn't one of the lucky ones who followed a normal life path. Now 26 years old, Eugene can see no purpose in life. He has a vague ambition to do something with his life but isn't sure what.

Eugene has learned little from his time in the country and his killing of Lensky, once again back in St. Petersburg and feeling dissatisfied with life. Nevertheless, the narrator offers him sympathy, showing how the novel in general seeks to understand at times sympathize with its characters, even as they make bad, self-destructive choices.

At the party Eugene attends, a general arrives with a woman who isn't a traditional beauty but has something radiant about her. Eugene suddenly recognizes her as Tatyana and wonders how that could be possible. Eugene starts a conversation with the general and finds that the woman who arrived with him is indeed Tatyana, who is now his wife.

While Eugene is still his same old self after all the time that has passed, Tatyana has managed to transform herself into a successful member of mainstream urban society by marrying a general. There is a sadness to Tatyana's transformation, which represents a symbolic death of her girlhood passions and ideals.

Tatyana is shocked to see Eugene at the party but tries not to show it. When he goes to greet her, he sees little of the Tatyana he used to know in the current lady she's become. All this time, Eugene has kept the letter Tatyana sent him. He goes back home in a daze and the next morning finds an invitation from the general waiting for him.

Although Tatyana herself has changed, the letter that she once sent Eugene allows him to still preserve a part of her past self. Tatyana's shock at seeing Eugene shows that she might not be as confident as she seems to Eugene. But, having learned her lesson years before, Tatyana now represses her feelings, not wanting to risk the pain that can come with emotional honesty.

Eugene goes over to the general's house, feeling nervous but not sure precisely why. When he arrives, Tatyana is there alone, just watching him. The general finally enters the room, however, and as more guests arrive, things become more sociable. Tatyana is a gracious host. The whole evening, Tatyana is all that Eugene can pay attention to, and he's impressed at how she's adapted to her new position.

As a girl, Tatyana used to avoid social gatherings and stay inside to read. The fact that Tatyana is now a gracious hostess capable of intimidating even Eugene with her social skills reflects how much she has changed since her marriage. When Eugene rejected Tatyana, he talked down to her, but now he himself feels beneath her.

Eugene finds himself in love with Tatyana, in a way he hasn't felt since he was a boy. In the days after the party, he finds excuses to spend time near her. But nothing he does attracts her attention. Eugene begins to get sickly, and people urge him to see a doctor. He refuses and instead tries to cure himself by writing a letter to Tatyana. In the letter, Eugene writes that he knows Tatyana won't want to hear this, but he says he's always loved her and just didn't want to accept it at first. Now all he does is think of her. He ends the letter by saying he knows it's too late, but he'll place himself in her power.

Eugene's sudden infatuation with Tatyana mirrors her own infatuation with him, right down to the fact that he decides to write a letter to express his feelings. What makes his situation tragic is that he only developed these feelings for Tatyana after it was too late and she was already married. In many ways, this reflects Eugene's approach to life in general—always unhappy with what he has and searching for things he either can't find or can never have.

Eugene gets no answer, so he writes Tatyana another letter. Again, she doesn't answer. Later, he sees her at a party, and even her look seems to reject him. He leaves the party feeling even more hopeless than before. He spends the next few days reading writers from around the world to try to figure out what to do next. Against his will, he begins thinking again of the day Lensky died.

Eugene's multiple letters to Tatyana suggest that he is even more desperate and lovesick than Tatyana was back then—but that his efforts might be even more futile. Eugene's reading of writers from around the world reflects how his current feelings are universal but also how books alone are not enough to provide him with a solution. Eugene's thoughts of Lensky's death, which he can't escape, reflect how Eugene is haunted by regrets and suggest that perhaps his current desperation for Tatyana is part of an attempt to try to put his killing of Lensky behind him.

Although Eugene almost goes mad during this period of time, the narrator notes that he also became more like a poet than ever before. Winter ends, and by spring, Eugene begins to feel a little better. One day, he again decides to go see Tatyana. He finds Tatyana alone at her home, reading a letter and crying, looking like her old self for the first time in a while.

The narrator's comment that Eugene was most like a poet when he was deepest in his madness is perhaps a humorous commentary that trying to understand human emotions as a poet does is a form of madness. One cannot, the narrator suggests, feel the full intensity of human emotion and remain a functional member of the human world. Paradoxically, when Eugene is at his most desperate, he is also close to understanding something about emotions like a poet does, perhaps because now Eugene acknowledges his problems rather than just being cynical and numb.

Tatyana looks up and sees Eugene. She tells him that just as he once made a speech to her, now she has to give a speech to him. She says that although he acted nobly earlier, he rejected her love, and she wonders why he's still pursuing her now. She says that is she did anything to disgrace the general, it would be a major scandal.

Tatyana's rejection speech to Eugene continues to mirror her earlier attempt to win his love and his rejection of her. Like Eugene, who portrayed himself as doing the honorable thing by sparing Tatyana from a bad marriage with him, Tatyana also tries to take the moral high ground. She shows how she is a faithful wife, even in difficult circumstances, further highlighting what Eugene lost by rejecting her.

Tatyana says she'd like to talk to Eugene as coldly as he did to her back after receiving her letter, but she won't. Still, she says that he's acting in a way that's beneath him. She adds that she and Eugene were almost happy together, but now that's impossible: Tatyana is married, and she intends to be faithful. Eugene leaves, feeling dejected, just as the general enters.

Tatyana's speech to Eugene shows how he had may have had the potential for happiness with her at one point, but he wasted it. This reflects a general pattern of wasted potential in Eugene's life. Eugene allowed himself to sink into cynicism before he even met Tatyana, and his killing of Lensky ended a potential friendship and wasted whatever potential Lensky had in his life.

The narrator says it's time to leave Eugene for good. The narrator hopes that he and the reader can part on friendly terms. He says goodbye to the current **book**, which he worked long and hard on. The narrator says he admires people who know when it's time to leave a feast, and he feels that this is what he has to do with Eugene Onegin.

On the one hand, the novel's ending is bleak, with Eugene consumed by regret and Tatyana stuck in a cold, loveless marriage. Still, just as the narrator once hoped for a better future for Russia, here the narrator hopes that the sad story of Eugene and Tatyana may at least have some purpose in entertaining or instructing the audience.

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