

Worksheet 6. Crime and Punishment in Practice (teacher version)

The crime takes place in the last chapter of Part 1, and punishment dominates the rest of the novel. According to the “extraordinary man” theory, a great man is exempt from limits that constrict ordinary human behavior. Does Raskolnikov’s experience support or refute the theory? Answer the following questions to consider this issue.

1. In Part 1, Chapter 5, after his terrible dream, Raskolnikov concludes that, despite the validity of his theory, he cannot commit the murder he planned. How does he feel after that realization?

He believes that there is nothing wrong with the theory, but that he cannot commit the murder he has planned. His response is a feeling of peace and wholeness, as if a terrible abscess has been healed. He prays and renounces his plans.

2. Part 2, Chapter 1, describes his situation in the hours after the murders. What are his states of mind and body?

He is ill and disoriented, as well as desperate to get rid of evidence of his guilt. He has difficulty focusing on details and considering ramifications.

3. Describe the split between intellect and emotions that it is evident through Parts 2 through 6, and provide specific textual evidence to support your view.

Throughout the novel the intellect is concerned with ideas and theories that seem remote from real life as most people experience it. The intellect can even trick a person into betraying his/her own best interests. Emotions, on the other hand, are more honest and direct. Numerous textual supports are possible, including the dream about the peasant and the horse, conversations with Sonia, and Raskolnikov’s thinking in the epilogue.

4. What factors prompt Raskolnikov’s confession at the end of Part 6? Has that confession been inevitable from the very beginning? Has the war between intellect and emotion been resolved?

Emotion (reinforced by Sonia) compels the confession; intellect has nothing to do with it. It appears that confession is the only way to peace. Given Raskolnikov’s personality, that is probably the case. Even in prison in Siberia, at least at first, he believes in the theory and thinks of the pawnbroker as a parasite, not a human being. Full resolution of the conflict between intellect and emotion seem to be part of his future.

5. What is the “new story” referred to in the book’s closing words? How does it relate to the theory of crime and punishment?

The new story would include the post-prison lives of Raskolnikov and Sonia, as well as the futures of Razumihin and Dounia. Punishment, it seems, is inevitable and necessary in order to achieve redemption and freedom from guilt.