

CHARACTER OF NATASHA ROSTOVA IN THE NOVEL “WAR AND PEACE” BY LEO TOLSTOY

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Annotation: This article provides information about the novel “War and Peace” written by Leo Tolstoy by analysing novel and deeply goes through the character of Natasha Rostova.

Key words: character, novel, war, woman.

There is no doubt that the novel “War and Peace” by Leo Tolstoy is one of the most acclaimed literary works not only in Russia but all over the world. It is a masterpiece that vividly shows Russian society during the Napoleonic Wars happening more than a decade in 1805-1820. The novel was published in the form of serial between 1865 and 1869. The novel includes four volumes and an epilogue. By reading the novel it can be clear that Leo Tolstoy was able to show the reader the nature of war and peace, difficulty of people in harsh moments, search for meaning in life, love, forgiveness, and the passage of time. The novel is still widely read for its philosophical depth, historical details, and complex characters.

The novel intertwines the lives of several aristocratic families - most notably the Rostovs, Bolkonskys, and Bezukhovs – against the backdrop of war and peace.

Leo Tolstoy was able to give a unique description to every single character in the novel by sharing each character’s past, interests, family, appearance and dreams. And one of the main characters is Natasha Rostova.

Natasha Rostova is one of the novel’s most significant and beloved characters. Her character represents youth, vitality, innocence, and emotional growth, which are considered to be one of the most important qualities. Natasha is central to Tolstoy’s depiction of love, femininity, and the journey from naive adolescence to mature adulthood.

Short description of Natasha Rostova’s life.

Natasha, daughter of the Count and Countess Rostov, is an irrepressibly lively young girl who charms people even when her impulsive behavior breaches noble social norms. Natasha throws herself wholeheartedly into the things and people she cares about, whether it’s singing, a religiously pious phase, a romance, or a rescue

effort for wounded soldiers. She is 13 when the novel begins, and it's no secret that she is her parents' favorite. As a young teen, she has a crush on Boris Drubetskoy, though Countess Rostov discourages the courtship. When she's a little older, having officially come out in society and enchanted many with her precocious grace, she also turns down a marriage proposal from Denisov. After a brief renewal of her flirtation with Boris, Natasha is courted by Prince Andrei after her first grand ball, and they quickly get engaged, as Andrei finds Natasha's joyful embrace of life intoxicating. However, while in Moscow preparing for her wedding, she develops a sudden, confusing passion for Anatole Kuragin and calls off the engagement. After her planned elopement with Anatole fails, she falls ill from heartbreak for a time. She meets Prince Andrei again after his injury at Borodino and tenderly nurses him night and day. After Andrei's death, Natasha feels her life is over, but caring for the Countess after Petya's death revives her. Despite getting off on the wrong foot during her engagement, she and Princess Marya become dear friends in their shared grief for Andrei. Softened and matured by grief, Natasha listens to Pierre's stories with a new sensitivity and understanding, and she quickly reciprocates his love. They marry in 1813 and, by 1820, they have three daughters and a son together. As a wife and mother, she defies social expectations by dedicating herself exclusively, even obsessively, to her family and no longer caring what others think of her.

Personality of Natasha Rostova .

At the start of the novel Natasha embodies carefree innocence and exuberance, particularly in her interactions with families and friends. One of the examples of this can be her discussion with her father in her birthday. Natasha is also charming and emotional. Her charm lies in her spontaneity, emotional warmth, and vibrant energy. Her presence often lights up the narrative. No matter with whom she leads conversation she is able to support and give advice depending on her experience. However, Natasha sometimes can be impulsive. Her impulsiveness leads her to mistakes, such as her ill-fated engagement with Anatole Kuragin. Even she makes mistakes and experiences betrayal, heartbreak, and loss Natasha never loses herself and love towards her surrounding. She works on her mistakes and becomes a stronger woman by learning to value deeper forms of love and connection.

Natasha's relationships.

-Prince Andrei becomes Natasha's first major love interest. She falls in love with him in their very first meeting while dancing together. Andrei immediately makes a decision to marry her, however, they face many difficulties. Their engagement is a pivotal moment, showing Natasha's growth as she experiences both joy and heartbreak. Unfortunately their engagement breaks when Natasha is lured into an elopement attempt with the deceitful Anatole Kuragin, which devastates Andrei.

- Her relationship with Anatole Kuragin: Anatole's seduction of Natasha marks a turning point in her character development. He uses her innocence and vulnerability to manipulate her. This episode causes great shame and personal growth for Natasha as she learns about trust, betrayal, and consequences.

- Her pure destiny and the person with whom she eventually marries is Pierre Bezukhov. Pierre, the novel's philosophical and kind-hearted hero, shares a special bond with Natasha throughout the story. After much suffering and transformation, Natasha and Pierre marry, symbolizing her journey toward emotional stability and fulfillment. Their relationship reflects Tolstoy's idea of genuine, grounded love that contrasts with idealized romance.

Natasha as a Symbol

- Natasha represents life, youth, and the human spirit. Her character contrasts with the grimness of war and suffering in the story.
- She also embodies family values, as shown in her devotion to her siblings and parents, and later, as a wife and mother.
- In the epilogue, Tolstoy shows Natasha embracing motherhood and family life, reflecting his emphasis on love, simplicity, and domestic happiness as the path to fulfillment.

Natasha's Significance in the Novel

1. Love and Transformation: Natasha's relationships with Andrei and Pierre illustrate Tolstoy's ideas about love—how it can elevate, break, and heal a person.
2. Feminine Ideal: Tolstoy portrays Natasha as an ideal of natural beauty, warmth, and emotional authenticity.
3. The Human Spirit: In the midst of historical and personal tragedies, Natasha's character brings optimism, resilience, and the beauty of everyday life to the forefront of the novel.

Quotes about Natasha Rostova taken from the novel and their meaning.

1. "Natasha was a girl of thirteen. She was black-eyed, with a large mouth, not pretty, but animated and impulsive. Her childish laugh and naive curiosity made her irresistibly charming."
 - Meaning: This description introduces Natasha's character early in the novel. She is not conventionally beautiful, but her energy, vitality, and natural charm make her captivating. Tolstoy emphasizes Natasha's authenticity, which is a recurring theme in her character arc. She represents natural beauty and liveliness, untouched by pretension or artifice.
2. "Love awoke in Natasha, and she was happy; she was in love, and that love made her forget everything else, and made her ready for anything."

- **Meaning:** This reflects Natasha's all-encompassing and impulsive nature. Her emotions are intense, and love defines her actions. This passion is a strength but also a flaw, as it leads her into moments of vulnerability and heartbreak (such as with Anatole Kuragin). Her capacity to feel deeply makes her human and relatable.

3. "In her presentiment of the inevitable loss of all happiness, in her dread of the unknown future, Natasha was experiencing moments of despair such as she had never known before."

- **Meaning:** This quote comes after Natasha's failed elopement with Anatole Kuragin. It marks a turning point in her character development. Natasha's despair stems not just from betrayal but from the realization of her own flaws and naivety. It represents her loss of innocence and the beginning of her emotional and moral growth.

4. "Natasha had become stouter and broader, so that it was hard to recognize the slim, lively girl she had been. But in her face there was still the same, and even more of that something that made one stop and look at her."

- **Meaning:** This occurs in the epilogue when Natasha has matured into a wife and mother. Although her youthful physical beauty has faded, her essential charm and soulful nature remain. Tolstoy celebrates the enduring beauty of inner goodness and family devotion over fleeting youth and romance.

Quotes by Natasha Rostova.

1. "Why does he look at me as if he sees something in me that I don't see?"

- **Context:** Natasha says this about Prince Andrei when they first meet.

- **Meaning:** This line reveals Natasha's innocence and curiosity. She is surprised by Andrei's admiration for her, indicating her lack of self-awareness about her charm and value. It reflects her purity and unassuming nature, which makes her so captivating to others.

2. "I don't understand how one can love someone else when one loves someone with all one's soul, with all one's heart!"

- **Context:** Natasha says this during her relationship with Prince Andrei, expressing her idea of love.

- **Meaning:** This quote reflects Natasha's youthful, idealized view of love. She believes in an all-consuming, singular passion. Tolstoy uses Natasha to portray the raw and pure nature of youthful love, which contrasts with the deeper, quieter love she experiences later in life with Pierre.

3. "Happiness is so near, so near!"

- **Context:** Natasha exclaims this when she is betrothed to Prince Andrei and feels overwhelmed with joy.

- **Meaning:** Natasha's words capture her intense and spontaneous nature. At this moment, she is full of youthful optimism, believing that happiness is within her grasp.

However, Tolstoy subtly foreshadows the fleeting nature of such moments, as happiness, for Natasha, will ultimately require emotional maturity and resilience.

4. “I’ll never forgive myself for this!”

- Context: Natasha says this after her failed elopement with Anatole Kuragin.
- Meaning: Here, Natasha expresses deep guilt and remorse for her impulsive actions. This moment is crucial to her character development as it shows her growing self-awareness. Natasha learns from her mistakes and begins the process of emotional recovery, which Tolstoy portrays as part of the journey toward true maturity.

5. “What nonsense! If we’re going to die, let’s die with music! Let’s dance!”

- Context: Natasha says this during the Rostovs’ evacuation of Moscow, as chaos surrounds them.
- Meaning: This quote highlights Natasha’s resilience and her ability to embrace life even in dark moments. Despite the fear and destruction around her, Natasha chooses joy, representing Tolstoy’s belief in the enduring spirit of humanity. Natasha’s vivacity reminds readers of the importance of hope and lightness in the face of despair.

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