

## A note on Russian names

Keeping track of characters' names is one of the more confusing parts of reading a Russian novel, but hopefully this brief explanation will help!

- There are three parts to any Russian name: the first name, the patronymic (derived from the father's first name), and the last or family name.
- A person can be called by just their first name, the first and patronymic, the first and last, just the last, or all three together.
- Every Russian first name has one (or sometimes more) diminutive forms or nicknames that are used by friends and family to denote familiarity or affection. For example, Alexander goes to Sasha, Dmitry goes to Dima or Mitya, Ivan goes to Vanya, Polina goes to Polya or Polenka, and Maria goes to Marya or Masha.
- Russian names differentiate between feminine and masculine, so the endings are marked by gender; the last names of women generally have an "a" added to the end, but not all translations retain this.
- Several of our characters have "speaking names" that mean something significant for their character. I've listed the major speaking names below (note, this is not a comprehensive list of characters).

**Rodion Romanovitch Raskolnikov:** His first name is Rodion, and the diminutives of that are Rodya (which his mother calls him) and sometimes the more affectionate Rodenka or Rodka. The root of Rodion is *rod* which means family, tribe, or genus. His patronymic is Romanovitch, which means his father's name was Roman. His last name is Raskolnikov. *Raskolnik* means schismatic or sectarian. This name has two meanings; firstly, it refers to the schism (*raskol*) in the Russian Orthodox church that happened in the 1660s, essentially a split over church reforms and what constitutes truth and true practice of religion. The schismatics rejected the reforms; known as Old Believers, they were discriminated against for centuries. More generally, *raskol* refers to a schism or split; our character has a split personality and warring voices in his own head.

**Pulcheria Alexandrovna Raskolnikov (or Raskolnikova):** Raskolnikov's mother. Her first name is Pulcheria, her father's name is Alexander, and her last name is Raskolnikov(a).

**Avdotya (Dounia) Romanovna Raskolnikov(a):** Raskolnikov's sister. The diminutives for her name are Dounia, by which she is primarily called, and Dounichka, even more affectionate. Her patronymic comes from Roman just as her brother's, but she has the feminine version (Romanovitch vs Romanovna).

**Semyon Zaharovitch Marmeladov:** Semyon (the Russian form of Simon), the son of Zahar (the Russian version of Zechariah). Marmeladov is a titular counsellor by rank, and his last name refers to marmalade or jam.

**Sophia (Sonia) Semyonovna Marmeladov(a):** Marmeladov's daughter. Sonia is a diminutive form of Sophia, and she is primarily called Sonia in the novel. Sophia means wisdom, specifically heavenly wisdom (in contrast to the wisdom of the world). Sonia has a "yellow ticket" which means she is a prostitute. Prostitution was legal at this time in the

Russian Empire, however it was heavily controlled, so women would have to surrender their own documentation in exchange for the “yellow ticket,” meaning they could not travel even domestically without permission, and they were subject the frequent medical examinations.

**Dmitry Prokofitch Razumihim:** Raskolnikov’s friend. Razumihim comes from *razum* which means reason, intellect, or good sense. In contrast to Sophia’s wisdom of God, *razum* refers to the mind.

**Alyona Ivanovna:** the pawnbroker. She is just called by her first name and patronymic, as is her sister Lizaveta Ivanovna. They are stepsisters of different mothers, sharing a father named Ivan.