



BETTER READ LITERARY TOURS

Literary Tour

# RUSSIAN CLASSICS

with  
ROSAMUND BARTLETT

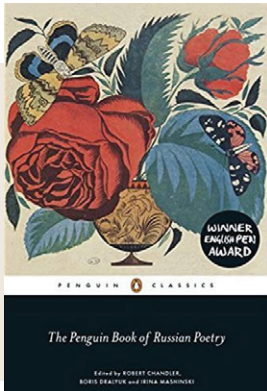
Moscow - St Petersburg, Russia  
6 - 17 September 2019

Recommended Reading List



# RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Better Read Literary Tours has compiled this reading list to complement the Russian Classics tour itinerary. We will be visiting many of the locations featured in these works and retracing the steps of these unforgettable Russian authors. We believe the particular translations we have chosen best capture the power and beauty of the original Russian texts.



## ***The Bronze Horseman (1833) in The Penguin Book of Russian Poetry***

Alexander Pushkin

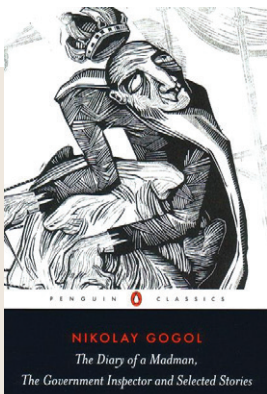
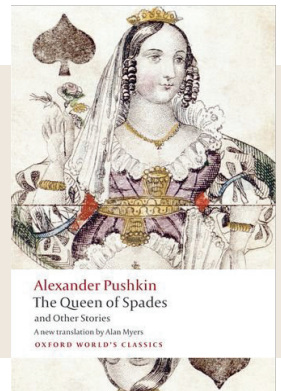
Robert Chandler, Boris Dralyuk and Irina Mashinski (ed.)

A dazzling narrative poem by Russia's most renowned and beloved man of letters. Pushkin's poem was inspired by the famous statue of Peter the Great in St. Petersburg and the great flood of November 1824. It is considered one of the most influential works of Russian literature and is one of the reasons that Pushkin is often called the "founder of modern Russian literature".

## ***The Queen of Spades (1834)***

Alexander Pushkin, translated by Alan Myers (Oxford World's Classics)

One of Pushkin's most popular and chilling short stories tells of greed and the uncanny, with an inveterate card player in St. Petersburg developing a dangerous obsession with the secret of an old lady's luck, which he believes will bring him the wealth he craves.



## ***The Nose (1836) in The Diary of a Madman, The Government Inspector and Selected Stories***

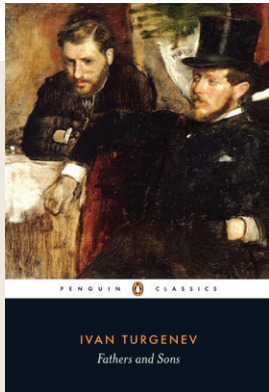
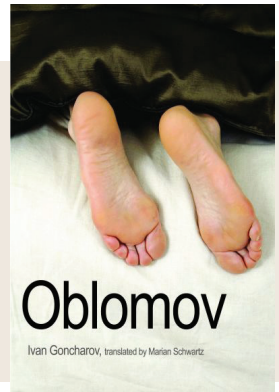
Nikolai Gogol, translated by Ronald Wilks, with an introduction by Robert A. Maguire.

The consummate satirist Nikolai Gogol was very sensitive about his own long, pointed nose. In fact, he even chose the writing pseudonym 'Gogol' because of it! In Russian, a *gogol* is a golden-eyed duck. *The Nose* tells the story of a St. Petersburg official whose nose leaves his face and develops a life of its own. During his time living in St. Petersburg, Gogol's works were primarily focused on the grotesque, with a romantic twist. The use of iconic landmarks in the story, as well as the sheer absurdity, has made *The Nose* an important part of St. Petersburg's literary tradition.

## ***Oblomov* (1859)**

Ivan Goncharov, translated by Marian Schwartz (Yale University Press)

What's the point of getting out of bed? The novel's antihero, Oblomov, seems unconvinced, especially as he has his servant on hand to bring tea and the daily papers. Translator Marian Schwartz breathes new life into Ivan Goncharov's voice in this first translation of the Russian original, and the first as well to attempt to replicate in English Goncharov's wry humour and all-embracing humanity. Goncharov's masterpiece is ingenious social satire.



## ***Fathers and Sons* (1862)**

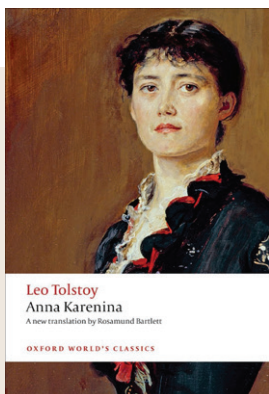
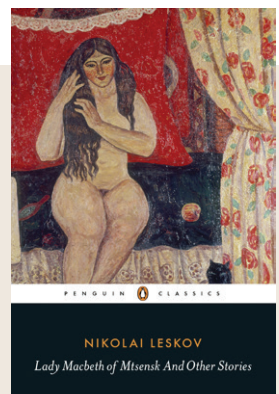
Ivan Turgenev, translated by Peter Carson, with an introduction by Rosamund Bartlett and an afterword by Tatyana Tolstaya (Penguin Classics)

Country sensibilities meet modern ideas (particularly nihilism) as Turgenev explores the ageless conflict between generations during a period in Russian history when a new generation of revolutionary intellectuals threatened the state. Peter Carson's elegant, naturalistic new translation brings Turgenev's masterpiece to life. In her introduction, Rosamund Bartlett discusses the novel's subtle characterisation and the immense social changes that took place in 1860s Russia.

## ***Lady Macbeth Of Mtsensk And Other Stories* (1865)**

Nikolai Leskov, translated by David McDuff (Penguin Classics)

Leskov is a writer known for the intensely Russian atmosphere of his prose. His short story masterpiece *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, originally published in an 1865 issue of Dostoyevsky's journal *Epoch*, tells the hair-raising tale of a bored merchant wife in provincial Russia who becomes a serial murderer. Leskov's Shakespearean title is heavily ironic, although his heroine Katerina is given full tragic stature in Shostakovich's better-known operatic version of the story. Its powerful, disturbing exploration of sexual passion and power still resonates today.



## ***Anna Karenina* (1877)**

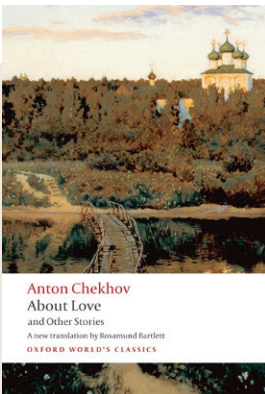
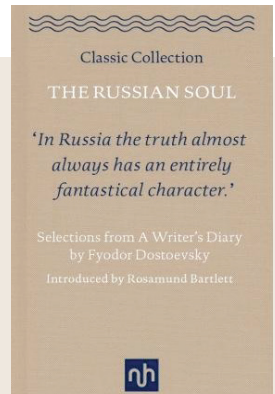
Leo Tolstoy, translated by Rosamund Bartlett (Oxford World's Classics)

One of the greatest novels ever written, *Anna Karenina* combines penetrating psychological insight with an encyclopedic depiction of Russian life in the 1870s. The novel takes us from high society St. Petersburg to the threshing fields on Levin's estate. It creates an intricate labyrinth of connections that is profoundly satisfying, and deeply moving. Rosamund Bartlett's translation and notes brilliantly bring this must-read classic to life.

## **The Russian Soul: Selections from A Writer's Diary (1873-1881)**

Fyodor Dostoevsky, translated by Kenneth Lantz, with an introduction by Rosamund Bartlett (Notting Hill Editions)

*A Writer's Diary*, self-published by Dostoevsky at the height of his fame, is a remarkable work which provided him with a vehicle to speak to his readers directly about burning contemporary issues in Russia. A mixture of journalism, fiction and autobiography, it also acted as Dostoevsky's creative laboratory, and is a source of fundamental importance in understanding the complex ideology of his novels. The selections in this edition include Dostoevsky's review of *Anna Karenina* and his quintessential short story *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*.



## **About Love and Other Stories (1898-99)**

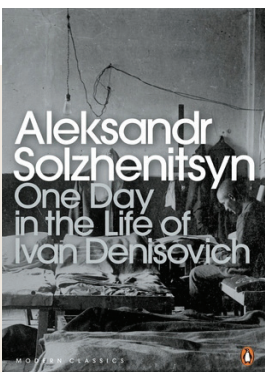
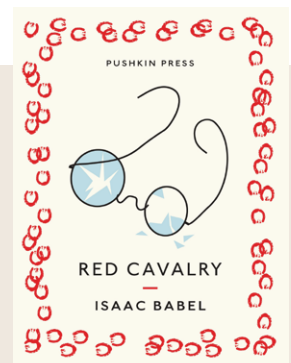
Anton Chekhov, translated by Rosamund Bartlett (Oxford University Press)

This unique collection of Chekhov's most lyrical stories, arranged chronologically to show the evolution of his art, includes *The Lady with the Little Dog*, as well as lesser-known works. These translations by Rosamund Bartlett capture the modernist qualities of Chekhov's writing by paying special attention to tone and prose rhythm. Pay special attention to *The Black Monk*, which Chekhov wrote in Melikhovo, and which we will be discussing as a book club during the tour.

## **Red Cavalry (1923-37)**

Isaac Babel, translated by Boris Dralyuk (Pushkin Press)

Using his own experiences as a journalist and propagandist with the Red Army during the war against Poland, Isaac Babel brings to life an astonishing cast of characters from this exuberant, violent era of early Soviet history. This masterful cycle of 34 short stories is considered one of the great masterpieces of Russian literature for it still retains the shocking freshness that first established Babel's reputation when his stories were published in the 1920s.



## **One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich (1962)**

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, translated by Ralph Parker (Penguin Modern Classics)

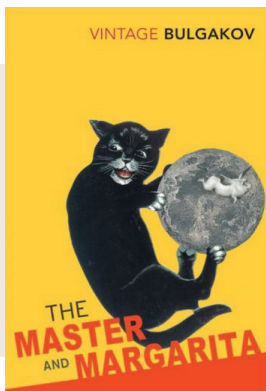
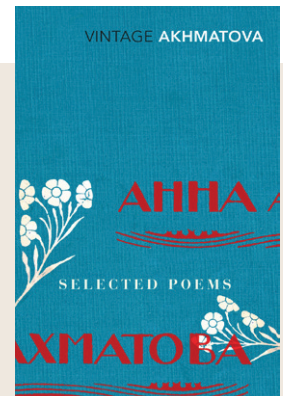
Published in the early days of the Khrushchev "thaw" but banned in 1974, this short work of fiction depicts the life of Ivan Denisovich in a Soviet gulag. It is one of the most influential works of the twentieth century and graphically describes the struggle to maintain dignity in the face of communist oppression. An unforgettable portrait of Stalin's forced work camps, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is one of the most extraordinary literary documents to have emerged from the Soviet Union.



### ***Requiem* (1963) in *Selected Poems***

Anna Akhmatova, translated by D.M. Thomas (Vintage Classic)

Tens of millions of people disappeared into the gulag system, members of poet Anna Akhmatova's inner circle among them. *Requiem* is an elegy of the Great Purge, one grieving woman giving voice to the suffering of a whole nation. Akhmatova waited until after the death of Stalin in 1953 to have it published, as she feared that it would be too dangerous for herself and those around her. Rendered with pure and harrowing artistry, it has become the best-known poetic work about the Soviet Great Terror.



### ***The Master and Margarita* (1940, pub. 1966-69/1973)**

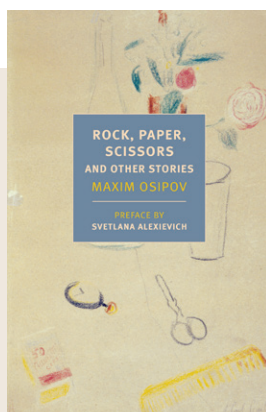
Mikhail Bulgakov, translated by Michael Glenny (Vintage Classic)

Bulgakov wrote this novel about the Devil (and so much more) in secret during the darkest days of Stalin's reign in the 1930s. Originally circulated in samizdat form, it was an instant underground hit when published in serial form in 1966 and the work's logic – or illogic – epitomised freedom and snapped its readers out of a state of cultural and political hypnosis.

### ***Secondhand Time* (2013)**

Svetlana Alexievich, translated by Bela Shayevich (Text Publishing)

A powerful oral history with a focus on WWII and the tumultuous experience of economic “shock therapy” in the 1990s. The stories recounted here were told to Svetlana Alexievich as she sat with her subjects around kitchen tables throughout Russia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Alexievich was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature “for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time”.



### ***Rock, Paper, Scissors and Other Stories* (April 2019)**

Maxim Osipov, translated by Boris Dralyuk and preface by Svetlana Alexievich (Forthcoming – New York Review Books)

Maxim Osipov is a doctor like Chekhov and Bulgakov and, like the men of letters before him, is one of Russia's best-regarded writers. This is the first English-language collection of his work, translated by Boris Dralyuk. The twelve stories in this volume depict doctors, actors and actresses, screenwriters, teachers, entrepreneurs, local political bosses, and common criminals, whose paths intersect in unpredictable yet entirely natural ways. Their encounters lead to disasters, major and minor epiphanies, and – on occasion – the promise of redemption.



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