

# "The Overcoat"

by Nikolai Gogol

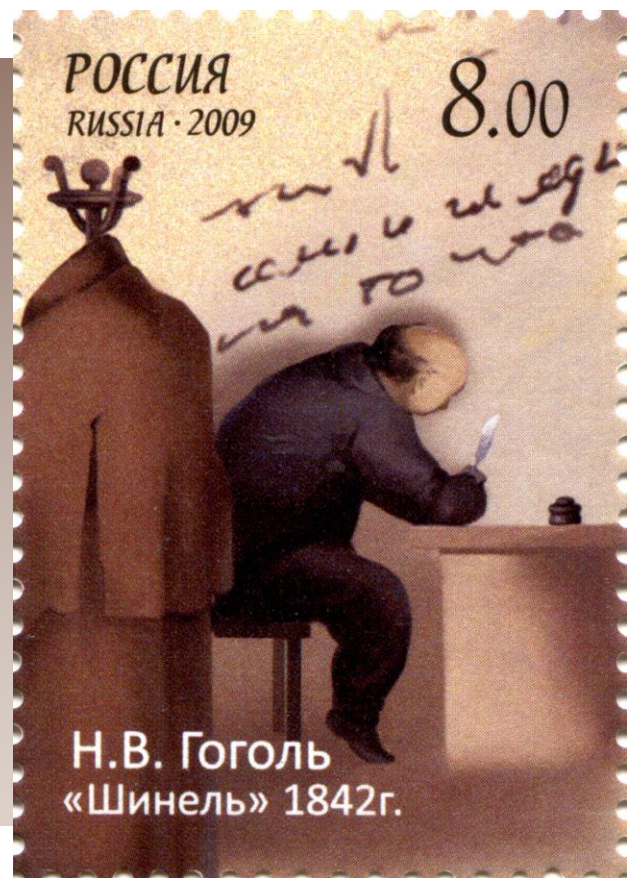
*If you are having a hard time comprehending the main ideas in Gogol's story, or if you simply want to ponder the tale's deeper meanings, then use these questions to bolster your understanding. The following is a list of suggestions for use:*

**Preview the questions before you read:** Use the questions to clue yourself in on what main ideas or events to be looking for while you read.

**Quiz yourself after you read:** After you read the story, see if you can answer each of the questions. If you can't, go back and look for the answer to strengthen your understanding.

**Take notes and reflect:** You may also notice that some of the questions included in this packet will clue you in on important themes and symbols. Use the questions as a guide for note-taking and reflecting.

**\*REMEMBER...your personal responses to the text are most important. So, don't let these questions get in the way of your own creative thought and interpretation.**



1. Why is the story of how Akaky got his name important?
2. What is interesting about the way Akaky works? What about his non-working time?
3. Why is copying an "interesting, pleasant world" for Akaky? Why doesn't he want to do other kinds of copying?
4. What do Akaky's eating habits tell us about him?
5. Is the narrator sympathetic to Akaky? How do you know?
6. What is distinctive about the characterization of Akaky's tailor?
7. Why is Akaky so upset by Petrovich's insistence that he needs a new overcoat? Is it really just about the expense?
8. What does the overcoat, old dressing gown or new overcoat, signify for Akaky?
9. Why does the narrator tell us that the image of the new coat became "like a wife" to Akaky?
10. How does the new overcoat change Akaky's relationship with his co-workers? In what way are his interactions with them different? The same? Is his fellow clerks' sudden interest in celebrating Akaky's new overcoat just another way to make fun of him without him realizing it? How do you know?
11. Why does Akaky say, "No, it would be better not to look" and then cross the dark square with his eyes closed only to be attacked?
12. In what way(s) is the overcoat the cause of Akaky's demise?
13. What is the role of the "Important Person"? Why is he in the story?
14. Why does Gogol diminish the importance of Petrovich and his wife if he mentions both several times?
15. Why is it significant that the Important Personage only regrets his habitual severity *after* his interaction with Akaky?
16. The narrator says of Akaky, "It would be unfair to say that no attention had ever been paid to him" and also, "No one had ever paid him the slightest attention." Which statement is true? How do you know?
17. Why the *second* ghost at the end? Who is it supposed to be?

18. What do you make of the supernatural elements that Gogol incorporates in his tale? Why do you think he included them?
19. How does "The Overcoat" contain a critique of the social structure of Russia in Gogol's time? (In other words, what social commentary is evident in the story?)
20. Is this story a comic-tragedy or a tragic-comedy?