

Student's name

Instructor's name

Course

Date

### The Life of Yuri Zhivago

To begin with, Russian literature has many excellent examples of novels telling a compelling story of a main character from his or her childhood to his or her death, and showing the impact of historical circumstances on the life of an individual. One of the examples of such character portrayals in literature is Yuri Zhivago. Yuri Andreievich Zhivago is the titular character of the 1957 novel *Doctor Zhivago*, which was the primary reason for its author to gain a Nobel Prize in literature. In general, the life of Yuri Zhivago demonstrates the inability of the individual to go along with the cruel demands of his historical period and the overwhelming desire to live a happy life despite challenges.

Yuri Andreievich Zhivago is a deeply sensitive man to the point of mystical qualities. He is a doctor who sees poetry as his main aspiration in life (Steussy 187). During political changes in Russia in the first half of the 20th century, Zhivago faces numerous challenges that become his personal tragedy. Similar to other great works of Russian literature, the life of Yuri Zhivago illustrates how a person stands no chance to live a happy life due to the political turmoils and social circumstances that prove to be stronger than a person's will, despite his or her good qualities.

Yuri's date of birth is not specified in the novel; however, since the novel's plot starts around 1903, it is safe to assume that he was born in the mid-1890s (Gifford 163). As a boy, Yuri was abandoned by his father who presumably committed suicide after having left his family without Yuri's knowledge of this fact (Pasternak). The boy and his mother live in poverty even though his father is a well-known, rich man. A few years later, the young boy is left devastated after his mother dies of heart failure. The orphan goes to live with his maternal uncle, Nicolai.

Yuri chooses to become a doctor when he comes of age. His uncle suggests him to stay with the Gromeko family in Moscow during his studies. Yuri leaves his uncle's house and goes to live with the Gromekos (Pasternak). Yuri bonds with them, and becomes friends with their daughter Tonya. During his stay with the family, he accidentally meets a young woman, Lara Antipova. Her image stays with him for a long time after the by-chance meeting, causing him to experience feelings he never knew before. After Tonya's mother dies, Yuri and Tonya marry to fulfill her last wish. Soon enough, the couple welcomes their first child—a son named Sashenka (Pasternak). However, Yuri is taken to serve in the Russian Army as a doctor in the First World War the night the baby is born.

While in the army, Yuri suffers an injury that leads him to meet Lara again, who is working as a nurse in the army. Yuri falls in love quickly with her, but decides to bury his feelings for Lara, even though he sees her for a long time during his army days. He returns home to his family in 1917 (Pasternak). Upon returning, Yuri starts to suffer from depression caused by his feelings of loneliness due to not seeing Lara. Moreover, he is pessimistic about the future of Russia.

In the wake of the Russian Revolution, Zhivago and his family escape to a remote village in the mountains. There, he meets Lara again and begins to have an affair with her (Pasternak). Zhivago feels guilty about the affair and decides to tell his wife everything, but is kidnapped on the way home by soldiers of the Red Army to serve as a doctor for them.

Zhivago escapes captivity to find out that his family has been deported. Since searching for them proves to be a task too difficult to take, Zhivago instead chooses to live with Lara. The couple is not safe with local authorities, so they choose to live in the woods. Komarovsky, an old acquaintance of Lara, visits the couple and informs them that they are being watched by the authorities and are about to be arrested (Pasternak). He offers to take them to safety and let them flee Russia. Yuri persuades Lara to leave with him, telling her that he will follow Komarovsky. However, he never does, and instead returns to Moscow.

In Moscow, Yuri's health starts to decline. After remarrying and having more children, he abandons his new family and chooses to live alone in isolation, working on several writing projects he will never finish. In 1929, Yuri Zhivago died of a heart attack on a tram in Moscow. Lara accidentally attends his funeral and is devastated by his death (Pasternak). In the epilogue, it is stated that Lara had Zhivago's daughter, who is now an orphan after her mother died in a concentration camp.

To conclude, the life path of Yuri Zhivago shows the tragedy of the Russian intellectual in the face of the crisis of the Russian Revolution and the events that followed. The fact that the life of Yuri Zhivago turned into such a crisis illustrates how little concern the state had for the lives of the people who populated it. In a broader philosophical context, the life and death of Zhivago illustrate the fragility of human existence in general.

Works Cited

Gifford, Henry. "Dr. Zhivago: The Last Russian Classic." *Essays in Criticism* 9.2 (1959): 159-170.

Pasternak, Boris Leonidovich. *Dr. Zhivago*. Pearson Education Limited, 2008.

Steussy, R. E. "The Myth Behind" Dr. Zhivago"." *The Russian Review* 18.3 (1959): 184-198.