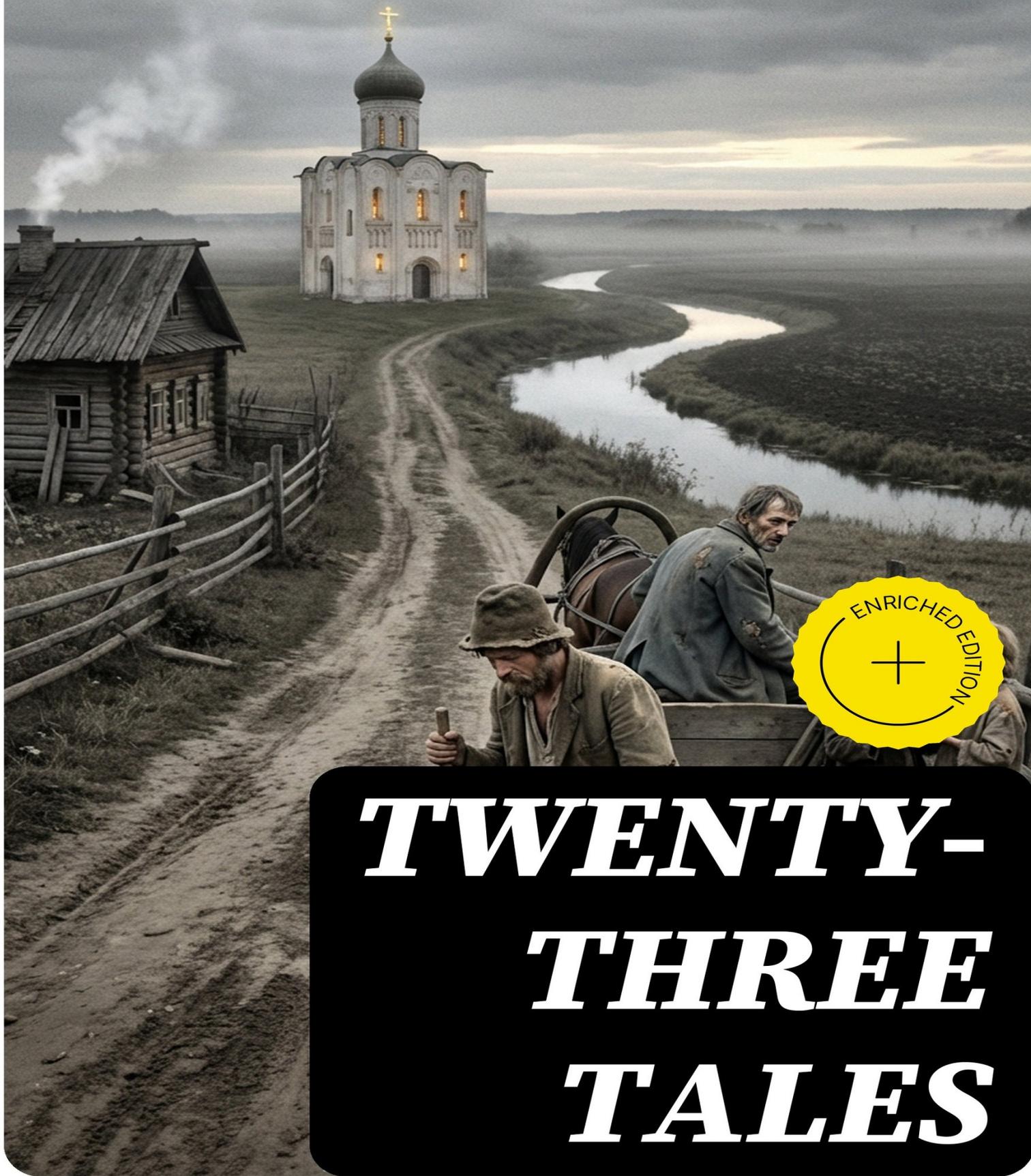
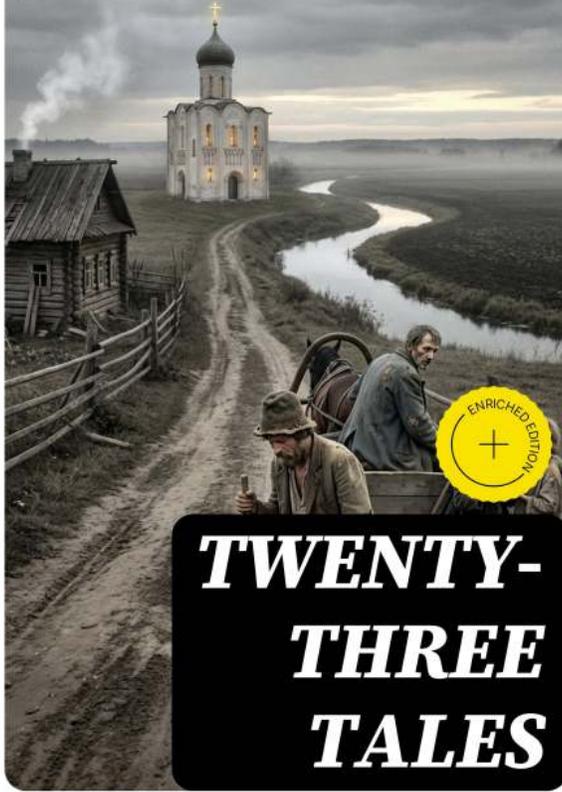


**LEV NIKOLAYEVICH
TOLSTOY**



**TWENTY-
THREE
TALES**

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**TWENTY-
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Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy

Twenty-three Tales

Enriched edition.

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Jared Black

EAN 8596547103714

Edited and published by DigiCat, 2022



Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Author Biography](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[Synopsis \(Selection\)](#)

[Twenty-three Tales](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

Twenty-three Tales gathers in one volume a compact survey of Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy's shorter prose, bringing together moral tales, parables, fables, sketches, and satirical narratives largely composed in the 1880s and 1890s. Rather than an exhaustive edition of his writings, this single-author collection presents a coherent arc of his shorter work, chosen for thematic resonance and accessibility. The sequence introduces readers to Tolstoy's ethical imagination apart from his long novels, allowing each piece to stand on its own while forming, in aggregate, a portrait of his mature preoccupations: the claims of conscience, the measure of justice, and the transforming power of love and humility.

The volume represents several text types. It includes brief moral narratives and parables such as *What Men Live By* (1881) and *The Three Hermits* (1886); satirical tales like *Too Dear* (1897); anecdotal or memoiristic pieces such as *The Bear-Hunt*; retellings of legends, as in *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria*; and philosophical dialogues like *The Coffee-House of Surat* (1893). Children's and folk-tale modes appear in *Little Girls Wiser Than Men* and *A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* (1886). The prefatory note orients the reader to the spirit in which the tales were written and read, without prescribing a single doctrine.

Taken together, the tales explore enduring questions: how to live rightly, what justice requires, and where

authority truly resides. Tolstoy sets peasants beside princes, hermits beside city dwellers, and merchants beside soldiers, tracing the same demands of truth through divergent stations of life. Recurrent themes include the tension between human law and moral law, the seductions of wealth and power, the capacity for repentance, and the redemptive force of compassion. The collection's variety of settings—from rural villages to distant islands and bustling cafés—serves a unified ethical inquiry rather than a tour of exotic backdrop.

Several early entries orient readers to Tolstoy's storytelling method. *God Sees the Truth, But Waits* presents a merchant unjustly accused, whose ordeal tests the meanings of guilt and forgiveness. *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* depicts capture and endurance on the frontier, reflecting the stark meeting of cultures and the limits of force. *The Bear-Hunt* recounts a perilous sporting episode with an eye for human frailty as much as bravado. *What Men Live By* (1881) begins with a shoemaker who gives shelter to a stranger, opening a parable about dependence, mercy, and the sources of life.

A cluster of tales looks closely at ordinary relationships and communal bonds. *Two Old Men* (1885) follows friends setting out on pilgrimage, asking what duties accompany devotion. *A Spark Neglected Burns the House* (1885) portrays a neighborhood quarrel that grows from a slight into a crisis, probing how resentments spread. *Evil Allures, But Good Endures* contrasts immediate temptation with the steadier claims of kindness. *Little Girls Wiser Than Men* distills conflict and reconciliation to a child's perspective.

Ilyás traces the fortunes of a prosperous herdsman and his household as changes in circumstance test dependence upon possessions.

The 1886 pieces underscore Tolstoy's mastery of parable and proverb. *The Three Hermits* (1886) presents a bishop confronting the unconventional holiness of three recluses. *The Imp and the Crust* (1886) frames temptation and self-justification through a peasant's small moral failure. *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* (1886) follows a farmer lured by the promise of ever more acreage. *A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* (1886) turns on the discovery of a curious relic that prompts reflection on labor and abundance. *The Godson* (1886) and *The Repentant Sinner* (1886) examine guidance, transgression, and mercy without sensational detail.

Later tales broaden the range of settings and tones. *The Empty Drum* (1891) adopts the contours of a folk denunciation of tyranny and fear. *The Coffee-House of Surat* (1893) gathers travelers who debate the nature of true faith. *Too Dear* (1897) satirizes the calculus of state punishment and poses questions about the price of justice. *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria* retells an ancient legend of conquest and recognition. *Work, Death and Sickness* offers an allegory of human burdens and their possible transformation. *Three Questions* frames a ruler's practical search for the right time, the right person, and the right task.

Stylistically, these tales display Tolstoy's celebrated clarity and economy. The prose moves with oral cadence, favoring direct statements, proverbial turns, and carefully

chosen repetitions. Scenes are anchored in palpable detail—tools, clothing, food, distances—yet the narratives accelerate toward ethical cruxes rather than decorative description. Characters often emerge in simple outlines that reveal moral contour rather than psychological complexity. The effect is not austerity for its own sake, but a purposeful stripping away of distractions, so that the reader’s attention rests on action, motive, and consequence. The tone remains frank, calm, and intent on intelligibility.

Although rooted in Christian teaching, the collection articulates concerns in broadly human terms. It lifts up neighborly service, nonretaliation, truth-telling, and humility; it warns against pride, covetousness, and the dehumanizing force of coercion. Priests, officials, tradespeople, and children move through these pages, testing whether institutional authority aligns with conscience. Tolstoy’s moral vision insists that wisdom can appear in unexpected places—in the unlettered, the marginalized, or the repentant—and that ethical insight often arrives through modest acts. The tales therefore invite readers of varied backgrounds to examine their own habits rather than another’s failings.

In relation to the author’s wider oeuvre, these short works compress the moral scrutiny that animates his longer fiction into lucid miniatures. Readers familiar with his epics will recognize the same insistence on sincerity and the same skepticism toward social pretenses, but now distilled into brief narratives designed for reflection and re-reading. For newcomers, the tales offer an approachable entry to Tolstoy’s thought, combining narrative momentum with

accessible language. The parable form allows him to test ideas in action without doctrinal argument, relying on the drama of everyday decisions to reveal abiding truths.

The continuing appeal of *Twenty-three Tales* lies in its balance of narrative immediacy and philosophical weight. The stories have been repeatedly read and discussed for their plain speech about difficult matters—how to forgive, how to be just, how to value another’s life. Their settings feel specific, while their questions remain portable across cultures and eras. In classrooms and private reading alike, they prompt conversation rather than prescribe conclusions. The collection’s variety ensures that readers can find multiple points of entry, returning to different pieces as circumstances and experiences change.

This edition presents the tales in a sequence that allows contrasts of tone and theme to sharpen one another. Many of the best-known pieces date from 1881 to 1897, with others drawn from adjacent years, reflecting a sustained engagement with ethical storytelling. The preface situates the undertaking without closing interpretive paths. Readers may profit from lingering over each narrative, attending to its images and questions before moving on. Taken together, the twenty-three selections affirm Tolstoy’s conviction that literature can clarify life by turning our gaze toward what we owe to one another, and what kind of persons we might yet become.

Author Biography

[Table of Contents](#)

Introduction

Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828–1910) stands among world literature’s most enduring figures, renowned for the panoramic novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* and for a late body of spiritual tales that distilled his ethical vision. The collection represented here gathers short narratives and parables—among them *What Men Live By* (1881), *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* (1886), *The Three Hermits* (1886), *Too Dear* (1897), and *Three Questions*—that display Tolstoy’s mature concern with conscience, compassion, and the limits of worldly power. Written with striking simplicity and moral clarity, these works deepened his influence far beyond Russia, shaping global conversations on faith, justice, and everyday goodness.

Tolstoy evolved from realist chronicler of Russian society to moral teacher who favored accessible forms. Stories like *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*, *A Prisoner in the Caucasus*, and *The Bear-Hunt* draw on lived experience and historical settings, while *Where Love Is, God Is*, *Two Old Men*, *The Story of Iván the Fool* (1883), *Ilyás*, *Evil Allures, But Good Endures*, and *Little Girls Wiser Than Men* cultivate parable-like intimacy. Together, they portray peasants, pilgrims, and humble workers negotiating sin, forgiveness, and neighborly love. The collection’s Preface signals Tolstoy’s wish to guide readers toward practical virtue rather than literary ornament.

Education and Literary Influences

Born into the gentry at Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy studied at Kazan University, first in Oriental languages and then law, leaving without a degree to pursue self-directed reading and service. Military life in the Caucasus and the Crimean War impressed him deeply; his Caucasian period fostered a fascination with frontier cultures and moral testing under duress. *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* draws on that milieu, and *The Bear-Hunt* reflects his passion for the forest and field. These experiences underwrote his realism and later fed the concrete detail that grounds even the most allegorical pieces in this collection.

Tolstoy's strongest intellectual commitments formed around the Gospels, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and around writers who prized sincerity and moral reform, notably Rousseau. Early philosophical reading, including Schopenhauer, sharpened his examination of suffering and the will. Equally formative were Russian folklore and oral traditions, which supplied the cadences and archetypes behind *Ilyás*, *The Godson*, and *Little Girls Wiser Than Men*. His curiosity about non-Russian wisdom traditions shaped works like *The Coffee-House of Surat* and *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria*. Prefaces to his popular editions often declared an educational aim: to reach common readers with truthful, unadorned narratives.

Literary Career

By the 1860s and 1870s Tolstoy was a celebrated novelist; yet his shorter works increasingly served as laboratories for ethical inquiry. *God Sees the Truth, But*

Waits—often dated to the 1870s—compresses questions of guilt, time, and forgiveness into a stark tale. *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* evokes captivity and cultural encounter, while *The Bear-Hunt* preserves autobiographical vigor in a compact form. These pieces anticipate the later moral parables by situating revelation in ordinary acts and perilous circumstances, anchored by plain style and purposeful structure that would become a hallmark of Tolstoy's didactic phase.

The 1880s brought a sustained turn toward spiritual instruction through narrative. *What Men Live By* (1881) initiates this mode with a story of humility and divine insight. Tolstoy's taste for folkloric breadth emerges in *The Story of Iván the Fool* (1883), where simplicity challenges worldly cleverness. A notable 1885 cluster—*A Spark Neglected Burns the House*, *Two Old Men*, *Where Love Is, God Is*, *Evil Allures, But Good Endures*, *Little Girls Wiser Than Men*, and *Ilyás*—uses domestic disputes, pilgrimages, and peasant fortunes to test charity, patience, and reconciliation. The same mid-1880s drive also yielded *Three Questions*, a concise inquiry into right action.

In 1886 Tolstoy produced a remarkable sequence that sharpened his parabolic economy. *The Three Hermits* contrasts learned religion with simple, living faith; *The Imp and the Crust* treats temptation through homely images; *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* examines acquisitiveness; *A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* gestures toward lost harmony between labor and nature; *The Godson* turns on obedience and conscience; *The Repentant Sinner* contemplates mercy. Stylistically, these tales favor

repetition, rhythmic prose, and transparent moral arcs. They were widely reprinted, translated, and taught for their lucid storytelling, though some contemporaries debated their overt didacticism.

As the 1890s opened, Tolstoy's shorter prose expanded into satire and religious pluralism. *The Empty Drum* (1891) adopts a folkloric frame to expose illusions of coercive power. *The Coffee-House of Surat* (1893) stages a polyphonic conversation about faiths and salvation, advancing Tolstoy's belief in sincerity over dogma. *Too Dear* (1897) relocates his ethical critique to a European microstate, where cost and punishment reveal the absurdities of modern governance. These works sustained the accessibility of his earlier parables while widening their social and political reach, showing how structural injustice corrodes compassion and common sense.

In later pieces Tolstoy increasingly generalized settings to address universal conditions. *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria* uses a legendary ruler to dramatize the moral awakening that arises from shared human vulnerability. *Work, Death and Sickness* abstracts suffering and solidarity into an emblematic fable about labor, dignity, and the human bond. Such late parables sit alongside major novels like *Resurrection*, yet they circulated in inexpensive editions and school primers, aligning with Tolstoy's educational mission. Prefatory notes and publishing choices underscored his aim: literature as a tool for self-perfection, accessible to readers beyond salons and universities.

Beliefs and Advocacy

After a spiritual crisis in the late 1870s, Tolstoy embraced a radical reading of Christianity centered on nonviolence, truthfulness, manual labor, and resistance to coercion. He criticized institutional religion and state power, a stance that brought censure and, in 1901, formal condemnation by church authorities. His ethical program finds narrative expression in *Where Love Is, God Is*, *The Three Hermits*, *What Men Live By*, and *Three Questions*, which prize conscience over ritual and neighborly service over abstract dogma. His personal experiments in simplicity and moral self-scrutiny inform the tales' preference for humble protagonists who discover meaning through care and work.

Tolstoy's advocacy was practical as well as philosophical. He supported peasant education and organized relief during the famine of 1891-92, convictions echoed in stories that valorize mutual aid and fraternal labor. *Too Dear* critiques the machinery and expense of punitive justice; *The Empty Drum* mocks displays of force; *A Spark Neglected Burns the House* warns against cycles of enmity; *Little Girls Wiser Than Men* and *Evil Allures, But Good Endures* celebrate reconciliation over pride. His writings on nonviolence influenced later reformers, and the clear moral architecture of these tales offered readers portable guides for ethical decision-making in daily life.

Final Years & Legacy

In his final decade, Tolstoy continued crafting parables such as *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria* and *Work, Death and Sickness*, while navigating conflicts with authorities and the burdens of fame. He left his estate in 1910 seeking quiet,

fell ill en route, and died at the railway station of Astapovo. Buried at Yasnaya Polyana, he left a body of work that reshaped expectations for literature's moral purpose. The stories in this collection—often read in schools and homes—remain touchstones for discussions of conscience, compassion, and social justice. Their plain style and universal questions ensure a living presence in world culture.

Historical Context

[Table of Contents](#)

Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910) wrote across tsarist Russia's upheavals: the Crimean War, the Great Reforms, accelerating industrialization, imperial frontier wars, and fin-de-siècle crises. *Twenty-three Tales* gathers short narratives mostly from the 1880s and 1890s, with some earlier pieces, reflecting his post-1870s moral turn after a profound religious crisis. They range across peasant Russia, the Caucasus, urban workshops, ancient courts, and distant ports, using brief forms to distill debates about law, faith, work, and violence. The collection's temporal breadth lets readers trace how stories written under Alexander II's reform era and Alexander III's reaction respond to shifting social realities while advancing Tolstoy's mature ethic of simplicity and nonviolence.

As he pivoted from grand novels to popular instruction, Tolstoy collaborated with Vladimir Chertkov and the *Posrednik* publishing house, founded in 1884 to issue inexpensive chapbooks for mass rural circulation. Many tales in this collection were first printed there, often revised to pass imperial censors while retaining pointed critiques of church, state, and class. The preface to such collections typically announced a pedagogical aim: to speak plainly to common readers. Growing elementary literacy after the 1860s reforms, together with the spread of railways and cheap print, made these stories vehicles of ethical

education and quiet dissent, even as clerical authorities later condemned Tolstoy's doctrines.

The abolition of serfdom in 1861 transformed rural life but left peasants burdened by redemption payments, land fragmentation, and communal constraints. Several tales interrogate post-emancipation aspirations and anxieties. *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* renders land hunger and the lure of expansion into steppe frontiers. *A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* contrasts older subsistence models with a cash economy that prizes yield over mutual obligation. Ilyás portrays wealth, loss, and dignity among steppe pastoralists, highlighting an ethical economy beyond accumulation. *Two Old Men*, set around a pilgrimage, frames peasant virtue against the backdrop of a countryside adjusting to reform.

God Sees the Truth, But Waits, first written in the 1870s, reflects long-standing practices of exile and hard labor in Siberia alongside the era's legal transformations. Russia's Judicial Reform of 1864 introduced jury trials and independent courts, yet administrative power and the penal system still shaped lives through exile, forced labor, and settlement. Tolstoy, increasingly skeptical of institutional justice, uses the short form to question retribution and to elevate conscience over procedure. Later moral tales such as *The Repentant Sinner* similarly weigh mercy against codified law, aligning with a Christian ethic that would alienate him from ecclesiastical and state authority by century's end.

A Prisoner in the Caucasus and Ilyás register Russia's nineteenth-century imperial expansion into the Caucasus

and Central Asian steppe. Tolstoy served in the Caucasus in the early 1850s and drew lifelong material from the protracted Caucasian War, which formally concluded in the 1860s. These tales depict encounters among Russians, mountaineers, and Muslim pastoralists, reflecting both ethnographic curiosity and the ethical confusion of conquest. By staging captivity, hospitality, and negotiation, Tolstoy moves beyond patriotic romance toward scrutiny of imperial practices, anticipating his later, sharper critiques of military coercion and the moral costs of domination that likewise inform *The Story of Iván the Fool*.

The Bear-Hunt recalls the culture of the landed gentry, for whom hunting symbolized status, discipline, and mastery over nature. Written as Tolstoy's outlook turned against violence, such reminiscences juxtapose aristocratic leisure with an emerging ethic of compassion. By the mid-1880s he renounced killing animals and criticized blood sports, part of a broader rejection of cruelty and coercion. The tale's evocation of risk and bravado thus illuminates a social world already in decline after the Great Reforms, as noble estates struggled economically and morally. In the collection, it serves as a historical window onto class mores that Tolstoy would come to question.

From the early 1880s Tolstoy pursued a radical reading of the Gospels, centered on the Sermon on the Mount, nonresistance to evil, and inner transformation. *Where Love Is, God Is* and *The Three Hermits* elevate lived compassion above ritual correctness, drawing on Orthodox legend and vernacular piety. *The Story of Iván the Fool*, written in 1883, expands this teaching into a socio-political parable that

rejects militarism, bureaucracy, and profit as traps. The Godson explores vows and the demands of conscience within a folk-Christian frame. These stories resonated even as church-state suspicion of Tolstoy's teachings culminated in his excommunication in 1901.

Industrialization and urban growth after the 1860s altered crafts and household economies. *What Men Live By* centers a shoemaker, representing the artisanal sector caught between handwork and factory production. *Where Love Is, God Is* portrays a small tradesman navigating a city's social extremes. Russian towns expanded with rail hubs and workshops, bringing wage labor, new forms of poverty, and charitable initiatives. Tolstoy, increasingly critical of wealth and wage relations, advocated mutual aid and simplicity. These tales, while set in intimate interiors, register broader shifts: seasonal migration from villages, the monetization of everyday life, and debates about Christian charity versus structural reform.

A cluster of very short pieces—*The Imp and the Crust*, *Little Girls Wiser than Men*, and *Evil Allures, But Good Endures*—reflects late-nineteenth-century moral pedagogy and the rise of temperance discourse. Russia experienced recurrent concern over alcohol's social harm, culminating in the state vodka monopoly of 1894 and various local campaigns. Tolstoy supported abstinence and wrote didactic sketches to reach children and adults alike. These pieces also countered sensational *lubok* street literature with plain, ethical narratives. Their distribution through cheap pamphlets and readings in village settings positioned them

within a broader movement to reform daily habits as the country modernized.

How Much Land Does a Man Need? and related rural tales engage the peasant commune (mir), customary inheritance, and migration to new lands. After emancipation, many households sought better plots on the empire's steppe fringes; officials encouraged resettlement to ease demographic pressure. Tolstoy condenses these realities into emblematic journeys involving surveying, bargaining, and boundary-making. The stories' Bashkir or steppe settings allude to imperial peripheries where Russian peasants interacted with Turkic and Muslim communities. Without detailing policy, the narratives capture tensions between communal security and individual acquisition—an unresolved issue that later reforms of the early twentieth century would attempt, fitfully, to address.

The famine of 1891–1892 devastated central provinces, prompting civil society mobilization. Tolstoy organized relief kitchens, wrote appeals, and publicly criticized governmental and ecclesiastical responses. This humanitarian engagement sharpened the ethical thrust of his short fiction. *The Empty Drum*, appearing in 1891, uses a folktale framework to question arbitrary power at a moment of heightened social vulnerability. *Work, Death and Sickness*, a later parable, distills his conviction that mutual labor and compassion counter human misery. While these pieces are not reportage, they are inseparable from the crisis that made moral action—and the critique of institutions that failed to act—a public imperative.

Set in an Indian port, *The Coffee-House of Surat* stages a conversation among believers of diverse traditions. Nineteenth-century Russia, like Western Europe, saw growing interest in comparative religion through translations, travelogues, and scholarly oriental studies. The tale mirrors that curiosity while advocating humility before the multiplicity of faiths. *Two Old Men*, centered on a peasant pilgrimage to Jerusalem, also reflects expanding horizons: the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society was founded in 1882, and regular Black Sea steamship routes made such journeys more attainable. Together, these narratives situate Russian religious experience within a wider world undergoing intensified contact and exchange.

Too Dear, written in the late 1890s, responds to newspaper accounts from Western Europe concerning the cost and spectacle of capital punishment in a tiny principality. Tolstoy's satire of bureaucratic rationality and fiscal calculation joins broader European debates about abolition that had advanced through the nineteenth century. His focus on money tallies with a sustained critique of state violence as both immoral and absurdly administered. Although Russia's own execution practices fluctuated across the century, the tale's setting abroad allowed sharper irony under domestic censorship. Its publication helped link Tolstoy's moral authority with international abolitionist and humanitarian arguments then circulating in the press.

Esarhaddon, King of Assyria exemplifies Tolstoy's use of ancient Near Eastern settings to universalize reflections on tyranny, conquest, and mercy. Late-imperial Russian readers encountered the ancient world through Bible study, popular

histories, and archaeology, and Tolstoy repurposed that familiarity to interrogate contemporary power. By shifting the scene to a distant empire, he could explore conscience, repentance, and nonviolence without naming current rulers. In tandem with parables like *The Repentant Sinner* and *Three Questions*, the piece distills his belief that ethical insight emerges from simple acts rather than institutions. It also harmonizes with his historical skepticism about glory achieved by force.

A Spark Neglected Burns the House and *Evil Allures, But Good Endures* adapt folktale motifs and village anecdotes to examine quarrels and reconciliation. Tolstoy listened to peasant storytellers and read published folklore collections, translating their moral economy into modern prose. *The Three Hermits*, drawn from Orthodox legendry, foregrounds charismatic sanctity outside official structures. These materials suited his aim of instructing without pedantry and of rehabilitating communal mechanisms for resolving conflict. In an age of rural courts, *zemstvo* institutions, and proliferating regulation, the tales suggest that neighborhood mediation, humility, and forbearance could stabilize communities better than formal authority or litigation.

The short fiction appeared piecemeal in Russian periodicals and *Posrednik* booklets before being gathered in various domestic and foreign collections; an English-language *Twenty-three Tales* circulated widely in the early twentieth century. Translations amplified Tolstoy's reputation as a moral teacher distinct from the novelist of *War and Peace*. Educators, religious reformers, and labor activists adopted these stories for schools, reading circles,

and tracts. Censorship sometimes restricted domestic editions, while abroad their plain style and fable-like clarity eased cross-cultural transfer. The collection thus became a portable anthology of Tolstoyan ethics, adaptable to diverse campaigns for sobriety, peace, and social justice.

Read retrospectively, the collection maps late-imperial tensions—land, law, faith, empire—into narratives that later audiences reinterpreted through new crises. After 1905 and 1917, radicals and reformers contested Tolstoy's pacifism, yet many drew on his anti-authoritarianism. His correspondence with Mohandas K. Gandhi in 1909–1910 signaled a transnational afterlife for the nonviolence articulated in pieces like *Iván the Fool* and *The Three Hermits*. Postcolonial readers have returned to the Caucasus and Surat settings to probe empire and religious pluralism. Today, debates about capital punishment, carceral justice, and sustainable economies keep the tales legible as historical commentary and as enduring moral provocations.

Synopsis (Selection)

[Table of Contents](#)

PREFACE

An opening statement frames the collection as a set of plainspoken tales that probe conscience, faith, justice, and everyday duty. It signals a preference for simple forms and folk clarity to convey moral reflection over spectacle.

GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS

A just man is seized by a wrongful charge and faces years of suffering that test his soul. The tale follows his inward journey toward forgiveness and a higher form of justice, using spare, restrained storytelling to heighten its spiritual weight.

A PRISONER IN THE CAUCASUS

After capture far from home, a man must navigate unfamiliar custom and peril to regain his freedom. The narrative balances tense adventure with humane attention to ordinary people on both sides, highlighting endurance and cross-cultural encounter.

THE BEAR-HUNT

A hunting excursion becomes a meditation on fear, bravado, and the thin line between sport and cruelty. Vivid

natural detail and sudden reversals underscore the moral unease beneath the thrill.

WHAT MEN LIVE BY (1881)

A poor craftsman shelters a mysterious stranger whose presence transforms the household and the neighborhood. Through small acts of work and care, the story argues that human life depends less on calculation than on compassion, in a gentle, parable-like voice.

A SPARK NEGLECTED BURNS THE HOUSE (1885)

A minor slight grows into a feud that engulfs families and neighbors, showing how resentment multiplies damage. The story's clear cause-and-effect design warns that vigilance over small angers prevents great harm.

TWO OLD MEN (1885)

Two villagers set out on a long-intended pilgrimage, but unforeseen needs challenge their plans and priorities. The tale contrasts formal piety with spontaneous mercy, suggesting that holiness is measured by responsive love.

WHERE LOVE IS, GOD IS (1885)

A solitary shoemaker learns to look for the divine in the faces of those who cross his threshold. Episodic visits and humble tasks become lessons in seeing sacred value in everyday charity.

THE STORY OF IVÁN THE FOOL (1883)

A guileless peasant advances through the world not by force or cunning, but by refusing to play the games of power and greed. Folkloric in tone and playful in incident, the tale imagines how simplicity can rearrange social life.

EVIL ALLURES, BUT GOOD ENDURES

A brief moral parable traces how temptation flashes brightly while steadfast goodness quietly outlasts it. The uncompromising clarity and economy of the piece exemplify the author's late didactic style.

LITTLE GIRLS WISER THAN MEN

A quarrel that adults cannot settle is resolved by children with disarming ease. The scene exposes how innocence pierces pride, championing humility over stubbornness.

ILYÁS

A prosperous herdsman rises in wealth, loses almost everything, and discovers what cannot be taken from him. Pastoral detail anchors a moral reflection on security, status, and the peace found beyond possession.

THE THREE HERMITS (1886)

A learned traveler attempts to correct the prayers of three simple hermits and is confronted by a mystery he cannot explain. The story gently contrasts formal knowledge with unadorned faith, ending in quiet awe.

THE IMP AND THE CRUST (1886)

beyond immediate protest. *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* portrays gestures and restraint as bridges across cultural and linguistic gaps. In these stories, silence is not passivity but a form of listening that prepares truthful speech. Conscience gathers in the space made by patient observation, which often calms the rush to declarations that outpace reality.

Everyday talk can also kindle or cool conflict. *A Spark Neglected Burns the House* (1885) follows how repeated words harden into quarrel when pride keeps them in motion. *Little Girls Wiser Than Men* contrasts adult insistence with childlike practical sense, where simple statements redirect a tense situation. *Evil Allures, But Good Endures* acknowledges that persuasive cunning travels quickly, while steady goodness moves more quietly through action. These tales caution against speech that aims to win rather than to mend, suggesting that the most restorative words are those tethered to small, consistent deeds.

Tolstoy also wields narrative form as ethical instrument. *The Story of Iván the Fool* (1883) and *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria* use fable-like clarity to reveal the shape of wisdom amid power and temptation. *The Empty Drum* (1891) employs the cadence of folklore to expose the hollowness of spectacle. *The Godson* (1886) structures learning through tasks and episodes, pointing conscience toward discernment rather than rule-following. Even *The Bear-Hunt*, with its brisk realism, draws force from the telling itself. Across modes, storytelling becomes a practice that invites readers to rehearse moral attention as they move from scene to scene.

Question 5

What vision of community and neighbor-love emerges across diverse settings and social roles?

Urban workshops and village lanes host many of the collection's most generous scenes. *Where Love Is, God Is* (1885) and *What Men Live By* (1881) portray ethical attention as responsiveness to those who cross one's threshold. *Three Questions* reframes leadership as timely service to the nearest need rather than distant abstraction. *The Coffee-House of Surat* (1893) models respectful exchange among differing beliefs, implying that civic community grows through listening as much as through agreement. In these pieces, belonging is built from steady presence, the everyday willingness to notice, and the courage to meet obligations that appear unsummoned.

Village conflicts show how fragile bonds can be renewed. *Little Girls Wiser Than Men* suggests that humility can cool a heated neighborhood, with children's practical wisdom guiding adults back toward peace. *A Spark Neglected Burns the House* (1885) traces how rivalry frays a shared fabric when small offenses are allowed to spread, while *Evil Allures, But Good Endures* affirms the slow durability of conscientious action. These stories anchor social health in small gestures repeated over time, presenting community as a craft that depends less on proclamations than on restrained words, forgiving habits, and concern for the common good.

Encounters across borders complicate belonging. *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* confronts fear and hospitality within a setting of cultural difference, suggesting that

recognition can arise under pressure. *Two Old Men* (1885) frames neighbor-love in terms of hospitality on the road, where strangers become a measure of piety. *Esarhaddon, King of Assyria* turns attention to the responsibilities of power, hinting that rulers, too, inhabit a web of obligations. *The Three Hermits* (1886) places remoteness and kinship side by side, implying that spiritual fellowship can bridge distance. Together these works broaden community beyond kin, trade, or language.

Several tales also question communal structures that forget persons. *Too Dear* (1897) depicts a state apparatus calculating expedience at the cost of humanity. *The Empty Drum* (1891) shows authority relying on display rather than service. *Work, Death and Sickness* reminds that a shared condition binds people despite status. *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* (1886) and *Ilyás* examine pursuits that can isolate individuals from their neighbors, while *A Grain as Big as a Hen's Egg* (1886) recalls an earlier social measure shaped by cooperation. Community appears strongest where institutions and individuals alike prioritize care over prestige.

Memorable Quotes

[Table of Contents](#)

1q "Samovár."

2q "And Aksyónof wrote no more petitions; gave up all hope, and only prayed to God."

3q "I will not be taken alive!"

4q "You, Iván, good; I, Abdul, good!"

5q "We were out on a bear-hunting expedition."

6q "'I have learnt that all men live not by care for themselves but by love."

7q "It is not given to man to know his own needs."

8q "Put out the fire before it spreads, or it will be too late."

9q "There's nothing more precious than the soul."

10q "We must go now, while we are still alive and have the strength."

11q "'When you have learnt to live for Him, you will grieve no more, and all will seem easy to you.'"