

Name:

Professor's Name:

Course:

Date:

Literary Analysis: Prose

Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is a novel that is centered on morality, criminality, and the works of guilt. Written from the perspective of Raskolnikov (the main character), the book also ventures into the minds of other characters and at times reveals their thoughts. Raskolnikov is a proud individual who despite his deplorable state of existence, is fueled by his enormous pride to alienation. He fancied himself better than most people and therefore, rejects anything that seems to put him and other people on the same pedestal including collective morality. To him, he was the epitome of humanity and was, therefore, prepared to test the limits of the freedom he had by engaging in evil. Raskolnikov fancied himself a savior and an anomaly and thought he was entitled to committing criminal acts in the name of a higher purpose or calling. One can say he was delusional, but as one comes to learn later, his plans come to an abrupt halt when he kills the pawnbroker and her sister. Having started as a rebel, the weight of the acts finally get to Raskolnikov and ultimately, he comes to terms with statutes of society and accepts the sentencing of men (Thompson, np). Dostoevsky's idea of this novel is indeed ingenious, and it is never enough to read the story once.

The novel encompasses different themes, and the tone often varies in different scenes. At some instances, the tone becomes emotional, despairing, and also confessional. However, the tone that characterizes the entire novel is resigned. When the tone of a novel is resigned, the main character, in this case, Raskolnikov, eventually opts to accept something he had never desired and one that did not fit into his narrative or character. As stated earlier, Raskolnikov was a rebel and always thought himself as exceptional and above the mere rules and regulations that other men were subjected to. Nothing, including falling in love seemed possible because he perceived himself as beyond such trivial issues or 'men'. However, as the novel comes to a close, Raskolnikov comes to terms with the fact that he does love Sonya and through her, he finds redemption and even accepts the sentencing of men.

Dostoevsky also made use of syntax and diction in his novel to help grow, and best tell the story. *Crime and Punishment* was written in the third person and as stated before, the perspectives often shifts, but readers get to experience and view actions mainly from Raskolnikov's perspective. Raskolnikov's mental state was unstable and to help reinforce this fact, Dostoevsky often used distorted views of reality whenever the novel shifted to his perspective. However, as the story continues and nears the end, Raskolnikov's perspective seems to clear which reminds readers of the journey he unknowingly was in and the transformation that took place. Dostoevsky also makes use of both internal monologue and dialogue to grow the story. The switch from internal monologue and dialogue can at times be confusing to readers, but Dostoevsky did a great job in gelling the two and using both to build suspense.

Symbolism often enhances the plot of a novel but only if used perfectly and with a specific goal in mind. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky makes use of Lazarus (Bible

character from the Gospel of John) as a perfect symbol of Raskolnikov. Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus Christ (The Messiah), and once he learned of his death, Jesus prayed and asked God for strength to resurrect him. Lazarus's story is indeed relevant in the novel and represents Raskolnikov's life. Initially, Raskolnikov was 'dead', and nothing seemed to move him to rational living. However, after the murder, the weight of the act, as well as his love for Sonya, soon set him up on the path towards redemption. He attempted to fight his feelings for Sonya as well as the guilt that was eating him up but eventually he gave in and confessed the crime as well as his love for her. Like a man raised from the dead, Raskolnikov started to live his life with a purpose and certain that Sonya was waiting for him once he served his time.

While the novel is set or is based on the internal workings of Raskolnikov, Uwasomba (142) explains that it can also be "an apt representation of a social situation with its social inequalities and how this inequality affects the personalities of individuals and their reactions towards certain situations." The society in the novel seems to be divided in perceptions, and everyone seems rogue especially in their beliefs of life. While Raskolnikov's situation stands out among the rest, it is clear that other people's perceptions are almost just as confusing as his is. Dostoevsky uses his unique form of writing to build the story from the introduction and albeit using simple sentences, the story becomes confusing, and it is easy to lose track of the character in play. However, it is indeed a masterpiece that unlike other cliché novels makes use of psychological observations as well as analyses to deliver his stroke of genius.

Works Cited

Thompson, Kevin. *Review: A Psychological Look at Crime and Punishment*. Psych Alive. 2017.

Retrieved May 28, 2017 from <https://www.psychalive.org/review-a-psychological-look-at-crime-and-punishment/>

Uwasomba, Chijioke. A socio-psychological exploration of Fyodor Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment. *Educational Research and Review*, Vol 4(4), pg. 141-147.