

Lesson Plan – Doctor Zhivago, Parts 11 and 12: Zhivago in the Woods

1:50-2:00 CLASS OUTSIDE. Lead class outside; while students get settled (preferably by a TREE of some sort), set the stage: we are outside, not quite in the woods, but we are out of our regular element, our regular structures of behavior and being. Usually, that's why we think of nature as a respite from the everyday; it can be a chance to reevaluate, but it also has its dangers and its own separate rules. Yury, too, in this section, finds himself in the woods, whisked off his path home, in a separate world

2:00 -2:05 general discussion: What, to you, stood out the most from today's reading? What was weird/suggestive?

Hoped-for responses/responses to highlight as threads that would lead/help structure future discussion: the violence of the men's existence; the absence of women; the strange women in the camp; Yury's missing of Lara but not Tonya; children.

2:05-2:15 group work: who are the women in this woodland society? What is their role?

2:15-2:40 Whole-class post-group work discussion. Connections to be made:

- Zhivago and his roommate lieutenant;
- Zhivago and the young boy he saves;
- the ethical muddle of the Partisan world, and war more generally
- the witch-like women and the overall fairy-tale overtones of the entire section
- the incantatory nature of language
- children as a (re)emerging theme
- Rowan tree – give mythological/Russian cultural background on the rowan tree -- and Lara (snow-covered white tree branches = Lara's full white arms)

2:40-2:50 Is Lara = Russia, for Zhivago? For Pasternak? For us? Is this the desired interpretation, or an accidental one? Is it convincing? Is it problematic, in any way? Do you like this interpretation, do you accept or resist it? What are the benefits and the shortcomings of reading the book this way?

2:50-3:00 group/pair work: Let's look at the specifics of style; read OUTLOUD to your partner(s) the passage you chose at home as particularly lyrical, and then listen to your partner. Explain why you chose that passage.

3:00-3:15 Whole class discussion of group work. Goals: pick up the threads of earlier discussion (nature as key force; Pasternak's lyricism and language as its own force); connection to poems at the end of the book. Is it productive to think of this whole book as a poem? As a fairy tale?

3:15-3:20 Conclusion. Summarize key/most salient points of discussion and (dis)agreement and set up the next reading assignment.