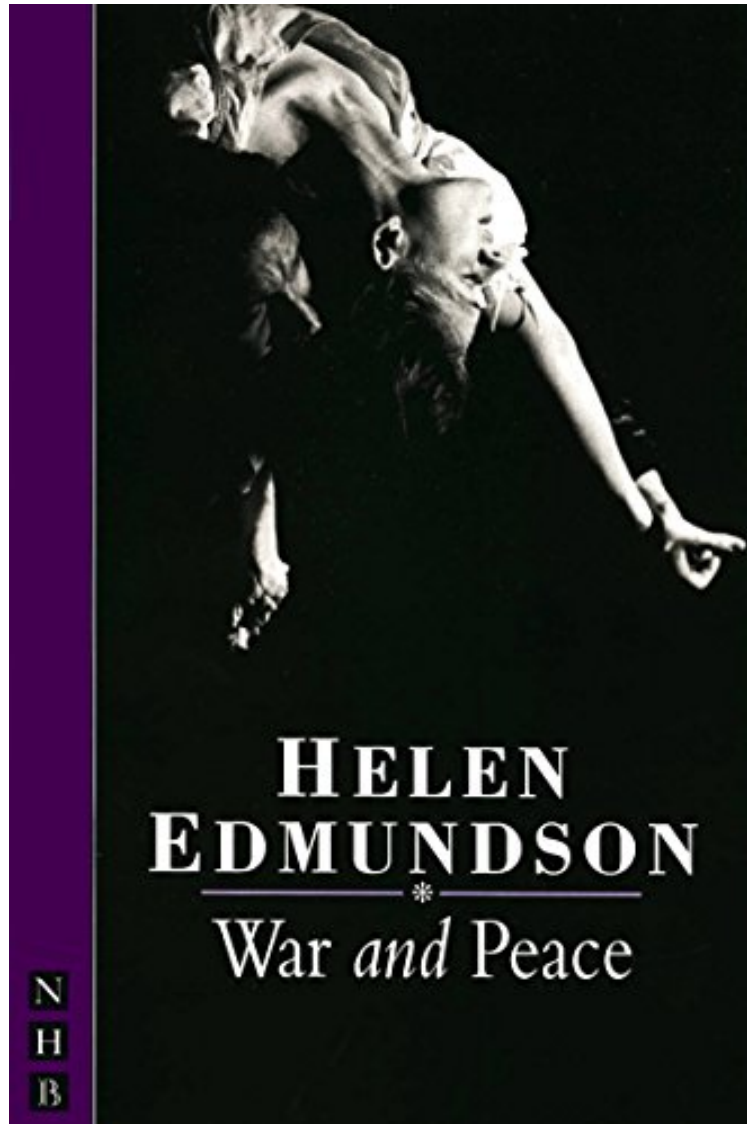


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War and Peace (NHB Modern Plays) (Shared Experience)

Leo Tolstoy

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Leo Tolstoy : War and Peace (NHB Modern Plays) (Shared Experience) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised War and Peace (NHB Modern Plays) (Shared Experience):

107 of 113 people found the following review helpful. Best edition I've seen
By AlexI have, at various times, tried to read four different editions of War Peace (Penguin, Signet, Barnes Noble, and now this) and by far, this is the best edition I've seen. This edition is everything I was looking for in a copy of War Peace and I cannot recommend it highly enough.
Pros:It is highly readable. Translating texts is always difficult, because you want to retain the feel of reading a Nineteenth century work but use language that makes the work accessible. Personally, I found some editions

(Barnes Noble, Penguin) to be hard to read and comprehend, especially when you first begin. This edition is a relative breeze to read. It has French translations. When reading the Signet edition, I found myself using Google Translate to understand sentences or phrases left in the book in French. Other editions translated most of the French but left phrases here and there untranslated and in the text, without footnotes. I understand in the original, Tolstoy wrote entire passages in French but provided translations in the footnotes. This edition follows that pattern. There are entire passages in French, but they are translated in the footnotes on the page. It has historical end-notes and an index. I am not unfamiliar with European and Russian history, but I, like most people, have no more knowledge than what I learned in my freshman world history class. This work has end notes in the text to provide context. Though it slows me down, I find myself flipping to the back of the book and reading every end note when the text provides it. I cannot stress enough how helpful this has been. The index is likewise helpful. It is an alphabetical list and short biography of the historical characters and places mentioned in *War and Peace*. It includes a short chapter summary. At the very end of the book, there is a chapter summary for a collection of chapters sharing a theme or describing the same event. The summary is no more than a sentence long and provides a nice refresher when you are trying to recall what happened when.

Cons: Compared to editions that translate all the French, reading in the footnotes can be burdensome. I personally don't mind, but I can see how that might trip some people up. If you are looking for a copy of *War and Peace*, this is the one to get. Trust me. 60 of 63 people found the following review helpful. Not Quite Fiction. Not Quite History. Not Philosophy. So What Is It? By Greg Polansky

Approaching *War and Peace* feels like a monumental task. Sitting down and reading it is not for the faint of heart. The story is engrossing and will consume you. It took me about four weeks to finish it because it's not the kind of book that one can read straight through. One puts it down to think about it, coming back after one has digested what has one read. Set against the backdrop of Napoleonic Europe, the story follows three main Russian families as they navigate the early years of the nineteenth century. Plot? Is there one? Perhaps. Perhaps not. The background history of the Napoleon Wars are what set in motion a lot of the action, especially for the male protagonists who fight in the wars. For the females it seems that love and falling in love and out of love and the passage to adulthood are what drives their stories. Our main protagonist is Pierre Bezukhov, a mirror for Tolstoy himself. The ideas Bezukhov spouts are usually the ideas Tolstoy believes in and wants you to believe in too. Pierre is the illegitimate son of a rich aristocrat. The other families are the Bolkonskys and the Rostovs. The Bolkonskys are right and proper with an autocratic father from one of the lower levels of Hell. The Rostovs are more homely and not so rich but full of love. There are also a couple of other families that play parts such as the Kuragins, who play the part of the somewhat "evil" characters. The cast of characters is indeed large as many say. But honestly the main characters that the book follows number about 5 to 10. So it's manageable. Aside from Pierre Bezukhov, there is Prince Andrei Bolkonsky, Princess Marya Bolkonskaya, Countess Natalya Rostova, Count Nicholas Rostov, and Helene Kuragina. The rest of the characters are secondary and even Helene is not that important. The book itself is hard to describe. Is it a novel? Tolstoy didn't think so. Is it history? Though there are huge stretches on the philosophy of history, this is not a history book. Nor is it philosophy. At least not necessarily good philosophy. It is something unique. Perhaps that is why *War and Peace* has attained the status of classic. It is a book that attempts to give one a complete (at least complete aristocratic) view of Russian society between the years 1805 and 1812. Perhaps the German word, 'Gesamtkunstwerk' - total work of art - should be applied to literature. I read the eBook Pevear-Volokhonsky translation that goes for \$12.99. It was a good translation that captured the spirit of the times. The notes and translations of the French were all hyperlinked which made things easy enough to read and follow. Though I would rather have seen the notes on the bottom of each page rather than the end of each book. Having finished *War and Peace*, I am glad that I read it. Though I am still not quite certain if it should be regarded as such as a classic. Is it truly that great? I'm still not sure.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. One of the greatest novels of our time

By Ron Penn

One of the greatest novels, if not the longest, ever written. This is over a thousand pages so be prepared. In essence, the story is this: We are introduced to the major families through the vehicle of a soiree at the Anna Pavlovna's home, a name-day celebration at the Rostovs, and a description of the isolated existence of the Bolkonskys at their country seat. Prince Andrei and Pierre discuss their futures and what they seek in life, both young men idealizing the "man of destiny" who is soon to invade Russia. Old Count Bezuhov dies, leaving Pierre wealthy, titled, and the most eligible bachelor in Petersburg. Nikolay Rostov and Prince Andrei undergo their first war experience at the battle of Schouml;ngraben. They each discover the ineffectuality of the individual in a mass situation. Nikolay accepts being a "cog in a machine" and Andrei rejects being part of the administering forces, choosing, instead, to fight at the front. Pierre marries Ellen; Anatole unsuccessfully courts Marya. Andrei attends the war council on the eve of Austerlitz and wishes to be a hero. He is wounded during the battle. Compared to the limitless sky, which symbolizes death, Napoleon seems to Andrei petty and insignificant. Nikolay, with Denisov, is home on leave and he ignores his sweetheart Sonya. Pierre wounds Dolohov in a duel over Ellen's alleged infidelity. Liza Bolkonsky dies giving birth to a son, leaving Andrei with a deep sense of unassuageable guilt. Dolohov falls in love with Sonya and avenges her rejection of him by fleecing Nikolay during a card game. "Intensity" is the keynote of this section, shown by incidents of love and hate, life and death. Separated from his wife, Pierre devotes himself to "goodness," by joining the masons and by an inept reforming of his estates. He and the retired Andrei have a

discussion about the meaning of life and death and Andrey is inspired with new hope. The significance of their exchange points out the contrast between Pierre and Andrey. Meanwhile Nikolay has rejoined his starving regiment and Denisov faces court-martial for stealing food for his men. Nikolay asks the tsar for Denisov's pardon and witnesses the meeting between Napoleon and Alexander, a meeting between the old and new orders of government. His petition rejected, Nikolay decides the sovereign knows best and submits to "higher authority." This is an account of "real life," as opposed to politics, where the "inner man" is more significant than the "outer man." Andrey becomes involved with Speransky's circle of reformers, but when he falls in love with Natasha these activities pall for him. Pierre becomes disillusioned with masonry, while Princess Marya is made more unhappy by her father. The Rostovs' financial problems increase, and Andrey goes to Switzerland. With the wolf hunt, the sleigh ride, Christmas celebrations, and family harmony, the Rostovs enjoy the last period of their "youth." Natasha's restlessness increases during Andrey's absence, the family is almost bankrupt, and there is foreboding of hard times to come as the children enter adulthood. Natasha meets Anatole during the opera and is almost abducted by him. During her near-nervous breakdown, Pierre emerges as her comforter and their love is implied. The life-and-death struggle against France begins, with Napoleon depicted as a glory-seeking fool. Andrey turns away from his past and commits himself to the men in his regiment, who adore him. Nikolay refrains from killing a Frenchman and is decorated for bravery because he took a prisoner. Natasha slowly recovers, aided by religious faith. Petya joins the army out of a youthful patriotism which Pierre also shares. The Russians respond massively to the national threat, and Pierre feels within him an "ultimate mission" involving his love, the comet, Napoleon, and the war itself. The French who are penetrating Russia march toward their doom in the "irresistible tide" of destiny. The old prince dies and Marya moves her household to Moscow, but the war looms closer. Despite the national upheaval, the Petersburg salons remain the same. Marya and Nikolay have a romantic first meeting, while Pierre visits the deathmarked Andrey on the eve of Borodino. The battle is described as a death duel, with the Russians winning morally, if not physically. This marks the turning point from defeat to victory for Russia. Tolstoy discusses mass activity as a combination of "infinitesimal units of activity" and provides a short summary of past and future events. Moscow's abandonment and burning is the great deed that saves Russia and the moment-by-moment details of the event are discussed, including Rastoptchin's last-minute bid for glory at the expense of the cause he pretends to further. The Rostovs leave Moscow, their caravan including the mortally wounded Prince Andrey. He is reunited with Natasha, who nurses him. So close to death, Andrey understands the quality of divine love. Truth results from a life-death confrontation. Pierre conceives the plan to assassinate Napoleon, but other incidents show he is destined to fail. Nikolay and Marya meet again in the provinces, and Marya travels to see her brother. She and Natasha are with him when he dies. Pierre is nearly executed by the French, who accuse him of incendiarism. He experiences a "rebirth" in prison through Karataev, an almost mythic figure symbolizing the unity of love and hate, life and death. The end of the war is in sight as the French retreat more and more rapidly. Their retreat is the "fruit" of "unconscious activity" rather than the will of Napoleon. Pierre discovers an intense freedom in prison. This period of guerilla fighting involves Denisov, Dolohov, and Petya, who gets killed. A surprise attack led by Denisov and Dolohov frees Pierre and other prisoners. In a flashback we learn how Karataev died, and what Pierre suffered and overcame during the death march. Death and decay are part of the processes of life and growth. Natasha and Marya are recalled from their mourning into active life: Marya by her household responsibilities, Natasha by exercising love to comfort her bereaved mother. As the war history is over, Kutuzov's career ends. A new era begins to disclose itself with Russia's entrance into international leadership. Tolstoy apotheosizes Kutuzov. Pierre and Natasha meet again. Tolstoy details the "happy ending" of the careers of his fictional characters in scenes to show the domestic happiness of Nikolay and Marya Rostov, Natasha and Pierre Bezuhov. The cycle of life begins anew as Nikolinka, Andrey's son, comes of age and desires to be like Pierre and like his father. This is the philosophical exegesis wherein Tolstoy shows that "free will" is a mere construct which historians use to explain the movements of nations and people. Causality is impossible to descry when we regard the pattern of historical events, and the concept of "free will" prevents deep understanding of the nature of history. The paradox, however, is inescapable: We need to maintain the illusion of free will in order to carry on our daily lives, for our hopes, our basic beliefs depend on this notion of an inner consciousness; at the same time we are victims of innumerable and infinitesimal constraints of necessity which spell out our destiny and we are not "free" at all.

A magnificent two-play epic, adapted from Tolstoy's novel and first staged by Shared Experience. One of the longest novels in Western literature, Tolstoy's *War and Peace* intertwines its epic account of Napoleon's invasion of Russia with the tale of three aristocratic families. Painted on a vast canvas of locations, characters and experiences, Helen Edmundson's stirring adaptation is an intricate saga of families, love and friendship against a backdrop of war. Helen Edmundson's earlier, one-part adaptation of *War and Peace* was staged by Shared Experience at the National Theatre in 1996. 'triumphant... what a remarkable, unmissable achievement this is... Shared Experience's approach is so fluid and fresh it can only reinvigorate your appreciation of the book' - Telegraph

'An epic achievement ... this *War and Peace* leaves you convinced it is a work for yesterday, today and tomorrow' The

TimesAbout the AuthorHelen Edmundson's breakthrough came in 1992 with her award winning adaptation of "Anna Karenina" for Shared Experience, for whom she also adapted "The Mill on the Floss". Her adaptation of "War and Peace" was staged at the National Theatre in 1996.