

# FROM DUSKING TO DAWNING

## Russian Literature – Middle Lesson - Class 12

### Introduction from Earthschooling

Many of these high school main lessons are already complete and contain all the material you need to do the lesson. We suggest starting with those guides that are already complete and leaving the ones that take more effort until later in the year as we will be adding more supporting material to each lesson. However, this is not required. If you are enthusiastic about starting a subject you can start right away. Part of the learning process is using your own skills to find complimentary materials you need. However, you are welcome to ask us for more help as well.

I have left this lesson as if he is speaking to the teacher, however this is easily used by you, the student, as well. Over the next few weeks I will adding additional supporting books and materials (so you don't need to find them yourself as he suggests). Once these supporting books and/or texts are available for this guide you will find them clearly available in the same section as this guide/text.

Meanwhile, you will use these guide/texts as you would a textbook. You will start and stop lessons at your own pace and do assignments when they are given in the text. Supporting materials can be found by researching the book or topic he recommends online or you can write directly to: [CustomerService@TheBEarthInstitute.com](mailto:CustomerService@TheBEarthInstitute.com) with a request, "Please send me information/book about (subject)" and we can do that for you.

### How to Do the Lessons

1. Read the Text, one concept or topic at a time.
2. Take notes in your Main Lesson Book and organize them.
3. Copy any images in the text into your Main Lesson Book.
4. Perform any experiments he suggests and draw/write about them in your Main Lesson Book.

Read any books or texts he recommends. Read and use the books/texts we have uploaded to this block (these are usually the same). If we do not have these uploaded please e-mail us at: [CustomerService@TheBEarthInstitute.com](mailto:CustomerService@TheBEarthInstitute.com) for the book. We are in the process of uploading all supporting materials to all the blocks. However, this may take some extra time with some of the lessons.

**\*\*Anything in a box is a lesson we have assigned you\*\***

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When I was about 8-years old, I would aid my cousins in throwing stones on the roof of an old lady up the street. Why? Because she was Russian. In the Lucky Country of the post-war years, all Russians were the enemy. The permafrost of the cold War was penetrating ever deeper into the sub-soil of the national psyche. This, unfortunately, had been ingrained in our heads as children.

We little hooligans remained unrepentant in view of the later “Petrov Affair”; an event comprising a bear-like, glowering Russian diplomat, his hysterical wife, a Qantas super constellation, and the lady’s lost shoe – a symbol of broken destiny perhaps? This tabloid in-depth analysis merely confirmed to us that the Reds were bad and we were good.

Our by now teenage jingoism alas went on hold when the Russians launched the first object into space, the satellite Sputnik (R. ‘fellow traveler’). This silver beachball-sized star was clearly visible from our backyard as it glided silently overhead on a twinkling 1957 night.

Our Western humiliation was complete when, in 1961, the Russians put the first human being in space, Yuri Gagarin, and brought him safely home. In the spirit of the ubiquitous Russian tragedy, he was ironically killed in a lowly air crash seven year later (a CIA job?).

By this time I was in my twenties, and beginning to express independent rather than propagandized thought – especially about Russia. This was assisted by Rudolf Steiner’s predictions about the great region he generically refers to as “the Caucasus”. He states that this is the world center for the next great civilization, beginning in 3573 and concluding 2160 years later in 5733. This will be governed, in the sweeping cycle of the Platonic Year, by the (northern hemisphere) vernal sign of Aquarius. Future-oriented folk, like Steiner, are living in the *Age of the Dawning of Aquarius*. Our own era, 1413 to 3573, is (again in the north, in the south we are in a Virgo opposite) a Pisces Age. The preceding period, 747BC to 1413, was of the Ram.

This past, present, future panorama is expressed in the main literature stream we study in Steiner Education: European Lit. is basically great due to its *past*; American Literature is very much of the *present*; and Russian Literature bears within its enigmatic soul the seeds of the *future*. Oh, and Australian Literature (rest easy overseas readers, you don’t have to study it!) spans all three time zones – for us at least.

It was not until I was engaged in curriculum-creation, 20 years later still, that I could fully atone – “at one” – for my juvenile wrongs.

This Class 12 Russian Literature middle lesson is just that, an act of atonement. Out of remorse for past sins, I dedicated this final language unit in 12 years of Steiner Education to the long-suffering Russian lady of Cowper Street Granville NSW, circa 1948.

While in this reflective mood in general, and thoughts on curriculum in particular, one may ask why I was engaged, in the early 1980s, with developing a Steiner curriculum – in this case for the high school – when Steiner Education has been in the World for over six decades?

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The fact is, *there is no Steiner curriculum*. The eponymous founder of the first Steiner school in Stuttgart in 1919 developed, over five years, a curriculum for *that* school. He did emphasize that this task must be undertaken anew for each country, even though many core principles remain – and indeed for each new school. Among many germane comments The Master made on his vexing issue, the following (Dornach January 1922) suffices to demonstrate: “If a (Steiner) school could be opened in England...such a school would have to be adapted to the conditions and cultural background of that country.”

The curriculum you have been reading, from Class 1 hopefully but certainly throughout his book, was conceived in Stuttgart in 1919. It was remodeled a few years later for English schools – exported to Australia from Edinburgh in 1957 by Glenaeon School in Sydney; and further adapted, by me, for Australian conditions generally and Lorian Novalis’s creative requirement in particular, 14 years later. Since I left the school in 1985, this *Living Being*, this singular version of many Steiner curricula, has been even further modified over the last 15 years as I gleaned even more information, and my experience horizons widened.

This so-called “Lorien curriculum” (sometimes names after your author) works a treat; especially in its continually updated form as appears in the *Golden Beetle Books*. These books are my attempt to *share* this syllabus knowledge and experience; but in no way to impose it.

Every school must remain free – is indeed obligated – to develop its own curriculum. In the light of all that has transpired in Steiner Education since 1919, each educational entity should create an individual syllabus for its own place, period and people; but one which extracts the gold nuggets of wisdom from the gravel of past experience.

However some ill-advised schools desperately cling to the glorious past; attempting to merely replicate the methods and programs of their predecessors. Steiner recommends rather a forward-facing, spiritually courageous approach; in the spirit of creativity in curriculum – to boldly go where no-one has gone before!

These futuristic ruminations led me to program Russian Literature as the last of over 60 Language units (all detailed in the six Language books of the *Spiritual Syllabus Series*) from Class 1 to 12. By immersing the soul for three weeks in the Russian Word, my hope is that this will help orientate, to be a spiritual compass, for our 18-year-olds to more consciously quest the cultural light over the horizon of the Age of the Dawning of Aquarius-(Leo). A short exposition like this is not definitive, rather a staging post from which the teacher can obtain method/content supplies to conquer the learning-adventure mountain ahead.

As a middle lesson, the emphasis is on the central, heart or feeling system; a more unerring karmic guide than the head. In this context the *Art* of literature must be emphasized over a more traditional ‘history of literature’ approach.

Of the four middle lesson *streams* of Professional, Cultural, Service and Industrial, awakening forces of the Ego Astral, Etheric and Physical in the same order, Russian literature is obviously programmed within the kaleidoscopic ambit of *Cultural* – the astral, soul or sentient middle lesson stream.

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Within this there are three *strands*; informing the trinity of soul forces, will feeling and thinking. These are, again in the same order, Arts History, Stage Arts and Literary Arts; Russian Literature again obviously programmed in the last. The teacher therefore keeps within one of the less conscious chambers of the soul the imperative to weave feeling-astral-thinking threads through the tapestry of the unit.

By considering these things at the initial stage of lesson preparation, they are then allowed to subside into the subconscious, where they become a living yeast bringing a greater degree of spiritual reality to presentation and imagery alike. All this of course is not easy; in fact Steiner Education is only for the brave of heart. But the effort is worth it in the wonderful outcome of young people well-grounded in practical skills, enlightened by universal knowledge, and made strong for the spiritual battles ahead that we all face in this enigma we call Life.

Actually this Literary Arts strand is one of the few I *haven't* taught. This task was performed, for the whole five years of my high school class, by my wife Susan. She began in Class 8 with *Myth and Legend* (see my book *Word Circus*); Class 9 *The Epic*, and 10 *Asian Lit.* (both in *The Pierian Spring*), and earlier in this book *American Literature*.

The last forms a balance to the present-future scales of literature: if the seeds of the future are germinated by the Russian Word, the fruits of the present are enjoyed in the cornucopia which is the American.

This continuity of a specialist teacher (as recommended by Steiner) for a lesson strand for the whole five years has, in the spirit of Unity, rich rewards for both student and teacher.

Susan was the Kindergarten Mistress, but agreeably re-arranged her schedule to take this unit with my class each year. For this teaching treasure I am deeply grateful. Susan too was aware that the future Caucasian Civilization was one of the unfolding of *Spirit Self*; just as our own Anglo-Nippon is Consciousness Soul. Rudolf Steiner tells us yet again that the germs of Manas (the Sanskrit term for Spirit Self) are stirring in our own age. The Art of Manas is *Poetry*, or by extension any of the Word arts, including literature.

These stirrings are no more evident than in the culture which will mid-wife this future spiritual faculty into the world. The Russian Revolution was a premature birth of this future power – hence its collapse. The Politbureau even had 13 members; 13 is the number of the future in numerology. Our own age is of course of the 12.

Russian literature is mostly born out of travail; reaching heights of poignancy and depths of bathos of no other genre. Coincidentally (actually there is no such thing as coincidence in spiritual life!), Class 12 is the Year of Spirit Self – hence a Word year par excellence.

This is derived from the 49-fold Man world view of Rudolf Steiner, from the Spatial Aspect of the Astral Body in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of life – the Rhythmic Aspect of the Astral in the 15<sup>th</sup>; Pictorial Aspect 16; Conceptual 17; and the conceptual-Pictorial Aspect of the astral Body in the 18<sup>th</sup> year, the 5<sup>th</sup>, the Spirit Self Aspect. “conceptual-Pictorial” is pictures (astral) elevated into words (concepts) – word pictures, as expressed in the art of Manas, Poetry.

As one can see, many factors combine to create the perfect educational-developmental environment for the teaching of a Russian Literature lesson. Before birth, in the spirit Self sense in about 1500 years, there must be death. We can sense this in another cardinal -points concept, that of 4-fold Europe.

There are four distinct sub-races (all are 'Caucasian', originating west of the Caucasus Mountains as they did) in Europe, the Celts, Nords, Latins and Slavs. A study of this quadrivium, from many points of view, is enormously enlightening. One example is the 4 Temperaments. Red-headed Celts (generally speaking) choosing the west, the Ego Regions, are *Choleric* in nature; Nordic peoples, with their dominantly blond hair, are *Sanguine-Etheric*; Latins, blue-black haired folk in the main, are *Phlegmatic-Astral* – and finally our variegated Slavs, who tend to the *Melancholic*, with its dominant Physical Body.

Without explanation (too long for the scope of this article) these qualities express even in the four manifestations of European Christianity – Anglican west; Protestant (Lutheran etc.) north; Catholic south; and Eastern Orthodox, from the Baltic to the Balkans, east. Each church places emphasis on a different element of the Christian Mystery.

Again with an unconscionable neglect of detail: the Anglicans seek to know the Unknowable in the form of the *Godhead* itself – the World Ego; the Catholics traditionally prefer the supporting embrace of the Queen of Heaven, the Astral Mother, *Maria*. Protestants venerate the Advent and birth of Jesus, the *Christmas* Mystery; a triumph of Etheric life! Its genesis, as Steiner informs us, was in the ancient pagan Jutland Peninsular. Finally the melancholic Slavs in general, and (white) Russians in particular, elevate the *Crucifixion* to the highest level of devotional ritual and meditation; the Physical Body – death.

Russian literature mirrors this preoccupation of suffering in this life and salvation in the next to a remarkable degree. A great novel like Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957) is the literary equivalent of the musical lament of the Volga Boatman! Pasternak's world classic is a revelation of a revolution; the author even winning the 1958 Nobel Prize for Literature. Alas he was forced by this xenophobic government to decline! In the ever-present spirit of Russian tragedy, he died two years later – of heartbreak perhaps?

Even the national symbol of Russia, the bear, is physical body inspired. The archetypal form of the physical body is the circle (or sphere); bears of course are, in essence, a collection of circles, which makes them very easy to draw! Roly-poly teddy bears are also the perennial favorite toys of children under 7; also dominantly circle-formed, being in their physical body developmental period as they are.

One of the most death-obsessed of the Eastern Christians was the Russian mystic priest Grigorio Rasputin; for an account of his own bizarre death, and in a curious contradiction his mastery of life, see earlier article on Russian Language. Rasputin was a Word adept in so far as he healed with the power of story, in this case both folk and spontaneously created (as many Steiner teachers are capable of) tales.

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Russian Literature falls clearly into two divisions, the greatest of the pre-Revolutionary era, with giants of word craft like Tolstoy, Gorky, Pushkin and Chekhov – and the relative creative impoverishment, due to Communist cultural repression, after 1917.

Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1865) is not only one of the greatest novels ever penned, it was prophetic as well; at least in the American-Russian present-future context. The American Civil War concluded the same year the great work was published.

Aleksandr Pushkin's work remained popular (read 'permitted') through the Communist years; Susan and I enjoyed, in 1986, a Sydney to Hong Kong ocean voyage immersed in the marvelously complex Russian soul on the cruise liner Aleksandr Pushkin. His brilliant verse novel *Eugene Onegin* (1833) became a Tchaikovsky opera (and later ballet).

Another glimpse of the future is found in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. This was published in 1879, the year the regency of the Archangel Michael – Patron Saint of the future! – began. Dostoyevsky was a colossus among giants in the literary Gallery of Greatness. In hugely influencing the development of the modern novel, he left a legacy we bookworms enjoy to this day.

Maxim Gorky followed this tradition, writing many world acclaimed works prior to the Revolution; including *Mother* (1907). Even though he lived till 1936, he succumbed to the Communist literary torture rack, failing to write anything of note under the new cultural tyranny.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote plenty though; much of it critical of Soviet injustice. This alas landed him in prison from 1945 to '53; exiled to Siberia '53 to '56 – and in exasperation (he was too well-known to kill; he won the Nobel Prize in 1970!) he departed to the West in 1974. *The Gulag Archipelago*, one of his finest works, was written in the same year. Actually Stalin didn't bother to ban contentious books by Soviet writers; he was too smart of that, knowing that this crates notoriety, which spices demand, He simply had them rewritten!

Enough years have not transpired, at the time of writing, for a new liberated generation of post-Cold War writers to make their influence felt – stay alert! Of course expatriate authors, like Nabokov and his infamous but brilliant *Lolita* should be considered in this lesson context.

*From Twilight to Dawning* was the title Susan gave to her Russian Literature unit. This was an expression of the torturous polarity of the Slavic people in general, and Russians in particular, between the past and the future – the pain of the present being the perennial mediator.

In this past-future spirit, Susan explored the time-misted years of yore of Russian folk legends, she chose a 4-Elements approach; these stories being so redolent of the powerful forces of nature in the unurbanized vastness of old Russia.

In the ascending order of decreasing density we have: *the Mountains of Gold*, a Russian peasant tale; *The fisherman*, a Finnish sea story; *the Panther*, a Georgian wind myth; and *Birth of the Fire God* – "he had hair of fire and a beard of flame."!

Another old Russian masterpiece was *A Small World*; the story of Adam's creation. "His body made from earth (Adam means 'read earth'), his bones from stone, his blood from the sea, his eyes from the sun, his thoughts from the clouds, his breath from the wind...and so on.

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The eponymous *Legends of Twilight* celebrated the heroes who defended the Mother Country; an example being *The Legend of Wizard Volkh*. Then there were the epics; the study piece being *The Lay of Warfar Waged by Igor* (1187). Also in this historical context, *The Primary Chronicle*, the story of Kiev, was explored.

With the Mongol invasions of the West by the indomitable Genghis Khan, an Eastern influence, an exotica, blended with the traditional Slavic word arts. Christianity followed, bringing with it a different kind of exotica, this time from the Byzantine south. An example of the latter would be one of the many 'saints' stories; St. Nicholas, Patron Saint of Russia, is also the Patron Saint of children – a future spiritual orientation once again! A later degenerate form, Patron Saint of Avarice, is of course Santa Claus.

Among the many apocryphal tales of St. Nicholas on his journeys, is one in which he saved children from a cannibal – another where he prevented young girls from being sold into prostitution by their father (the past!).

From the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the arts flourished in Russia, especially in the reign of Peter the Great. Catherine the Great was an inspired author of numerous satires, dramas, and poems; an example being *Grandmother's ABC*; stories of Russian history for children.

Early travelers' tales interest young people (on their own journey of discovery) with adventurous crossings of new frontiers to discover unknown places and peoples. Two studied in this unit were *Journey Across Three Seas* (15<sup>th</sup> Century), by Afanasy Nikitin, and the 18<sup>th</sup> Century *The Tale of Woe Misfortune* (typical!); and – appropriate for this age – allegorical tale for wayward youth!

The relatively modern era produced the masterworks of Anton Chekov; his *Uncle Vanya* being the study choice. Also, to insinuate the occult so persuasive in the Russian soul, the class looked at Dimitri Merezhkovsky's *Atlantis/Europe, The Secret of the West*. To quote this friend of Rudolf Steiner: "In order to understand that 'the end of the world' is a Russian vision, we must recall the fact that our whole literature from Chadaev, who all his life, in mortal terror, prayed for Russia and Europe together: 'Thy Kingdom come.' And Gogol, who became mad and died from the same terror, and Dostoevsky, 'the man of the Apocalypse', to Solovyov, with his story about the end of the world, and Razanov with this apocalypse of Our Time' – the whole Russian literature, the soul of Russia, is eschatology – the religion of the End."

Is the future a global disaster, as foretold by so many prophetic Russian writers, in this case, Turgenev?: "When all the earth shall return to chaos – And all that men have wrought – be hid beneath the waters – The waters will again reflect the face of God."

Even in this unlikely unit, the obligatory excursion was arranged. The class visited the ornate Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Blacktown – then off to the U.S.S.R. consulate in Surry Hills. Here we were given a talk (yes, we, I inveigled my way in to drive the bus!) and shown a propaganda film on Soviet Union – this was still 1985! I think the students were more impressed by the tight security around the building than the lofty ideas presented! We then dined in luxury at the splendidly Russian Gizvago Restaurant.

**Optional Assignment:** Find historical Russian locations near you and visit them. Or perhaps find festivals, churches, museums, or gatherings you can attend. Write a one page essay about each visit in your Main Lesson Book.

The pearl is the universal symbol of wisdom (as seen in “pearls to swine” and other epigrams). On our literary pilgrimage in 1997, Susan and I visited the great museums of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Here we were awed by the splendor of whole religious narratives embellished by thousands of pearls. In the Assumption Cathedral, we saw the famous Cassock of Pearls, a picture history of the story of Jesus, complemented by crosses of flaming gold.

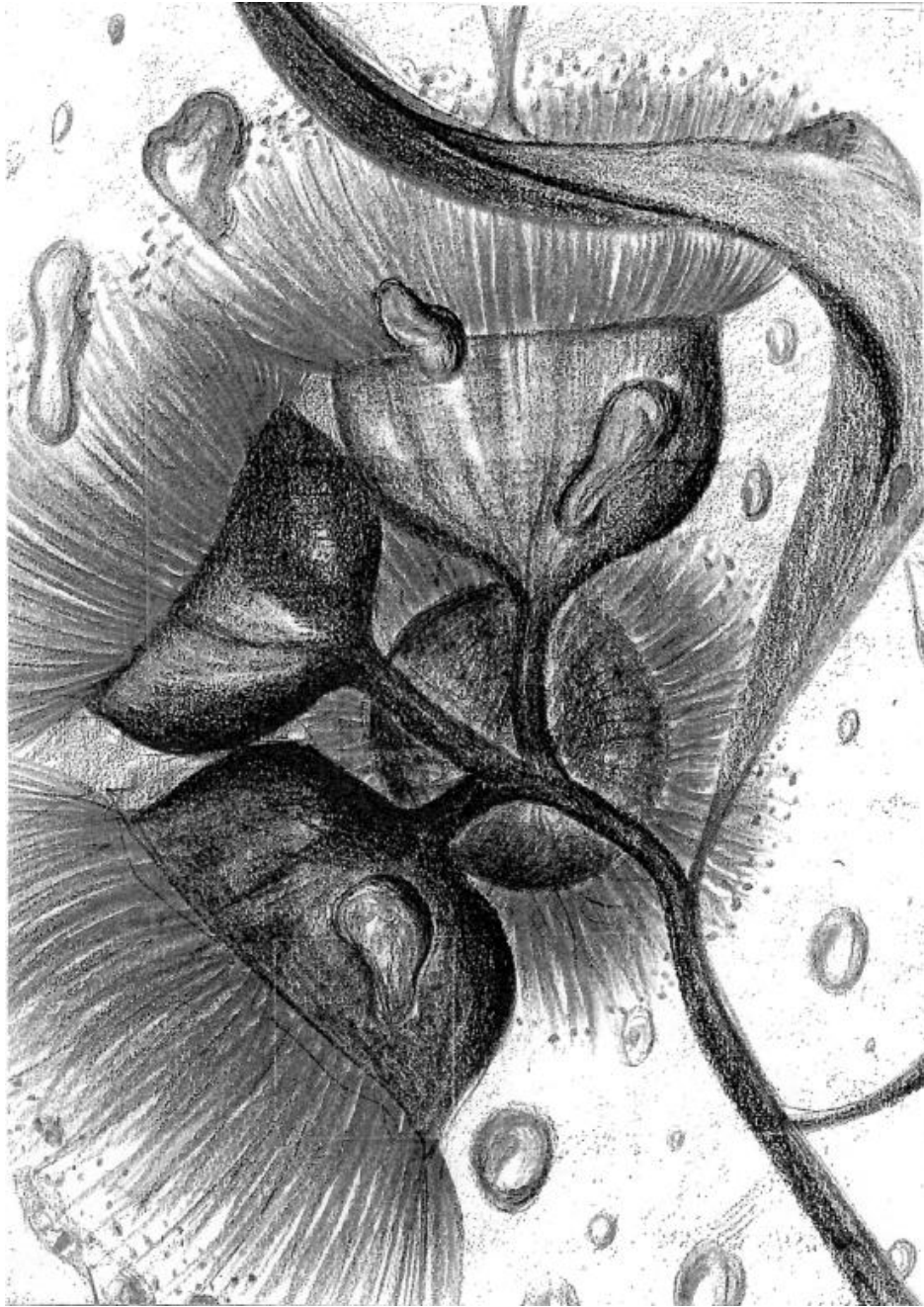
The greatest legacy of a unit on Russian Literature in Class 12, and of a 12-year Language education, of which this is the last, is the pearls of wisdom to be found in all the Word Arts. May your literary quest provide many precious pearls to richly embroider your own, and your students’ life story. In the spirit of Alpha and Omega, the past braided inevitably into the future, we conclude our literary odyssey with the beginning; from the *Creation of Adam*, a sadly ignored by so many of his descendants invocation to the Father of Humankind:

Love all God’s creation  
The whole world, and every grain of sand.  
Love every leaf and every ray of God’s light.  
Love animals and plants, love everything.  
But remember that you must face  
The Mystery of god  
In everything you love.



Susan Whitehead – Russian Literature teacher – outside the Kremlin, Moscow.





"The true nature of the ego-organisation can be studied in the subject of Language."  
Rudolf Steiner, Berne, April 1924

**Assignments:** Russian Literature is very 'heavy' in its reading. I find that I need to read it much more slowly than other literature. So for this block we will require that the student choose only three books to read. To choose the books you will read I recommend two steps – read the descriptions in this text/guide and see if something intrigues you. I can definitely say, as I read through Alan's descriptions, there were a couple books I had not read that I immediately put on my 'read' list. Secondly, don't feel badly about starting a book and setting it aside. Different books will appeal to different people. If you read the first chapter of a book you have chosen and are just not connecting with it then choose a different book. At the end of each book write a short essay in your Main Lesson Book answering the following questions:

1. What was the author trying to communicate in this book? What was his message?
2. Why is this book important in World literature?
3. If you were to recommend this book to a friend why would you tell them to read it?
4. Did any of your world views get changed or updated after reading this book? How and why?
5. What was your favorite thing about this book?
6. What was your least favorite thing about this book?
7. What was this book about?

Remember, there are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers – you are communicating your experience as a reader of this book and your experience is unique.