

Study Guide for *Darkness at Noon*, by Arthur Koestler

“The Party in the last analysis is always right, because the Party is the single historic instrument given to the proletariat for the solution of its fundamental problems. ... I know that one must not be right against the Party. One can only be right with the Party, and through the Party, for history has created no other road for the realization of what is right.” - Leon Trotsky, 1924

As you read the novel, take note of the following characters: who they are, what role they play in the story, how they relate to the protagonist.

Characters

Rubashov – the protagonist, modeled on Nicholae Bukharin
Arlova – his secretary
Vassilij – his porter

Richard – a German communist
Little Loewy – a communist dockworker in Belgium

Prisoner #402 – a Tsarist officer
Ivanov – the soft interrogator
Gletkin – the hard interrogator

#1 – the dictator

The novel is divided into 4 parts. Be able to recount the story line in each, placing the main characters within it.

1st hearing

arrest
Vassiliy
Prison
Germany
Belgium
1st examination - Ivanov

2nd hearing

diary extract
Ivanov and Gletkin discuss how to break Rubashov
Better conditions
Arlova and Trade Delegation
2nd examination - Ivanov

3rd hearing

diary extract
3rd examination – Gletkin (letter to a future Congress, Ivanov shot)

Grammatical fiction

Vassilij
Trial
Waiting for execution

Potential essays

Be able to relate the quotation from Trotsky on the inherent “correctness” of the Party to the actions of Rubashov and the other characters in the novel.

Be able to describe how Richard, Little Loewy, or Arlova served the Party, how they were discarded by the Party, and how they responded to being rejected by the Party.