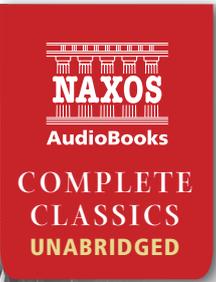


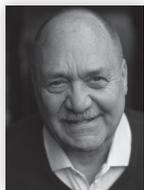
The Idiot

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

Read by **Constantine Gregory**

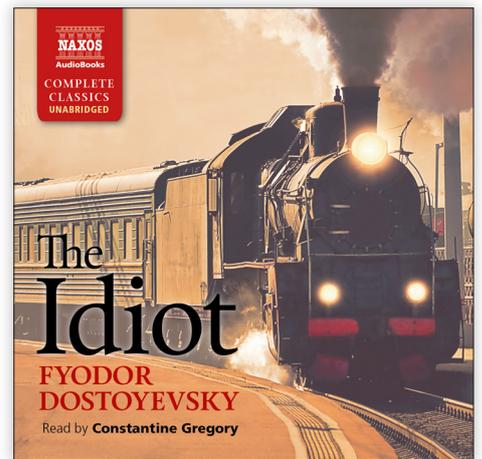


Prince Lyov Nikolayevitch Myshkin is one of the great characters in Russian literature. Is he a saint or just naïve? Is he an idealist or, as many in General Epanchin's society feel, an 'idiot'? Certainly his return to St Petersburg after years in a Swiss clinic has a dramatic effect on the beautiful Aglaia, youngest of the Epanchin daughters, and on the charismatic but wilful Nastasya Filippovna. As he paints a vivid picture of Russian society, Dostoyevsky shows how principles conflict with emotions – with tragic results.



Constantine Gregory is an actor, dialogue coach and 'voice'. Constantine has more than 30 years' experience in all these capacities on international projects with many major film directors, including Danny Boyle, Bernardo Bertolucci, Terry Gilliam, Neil Jordan and Julie Taymor and with actors such as Anthony Hopkins, Jessica Lange, Nicole Kidman, George Clooney, Gerard Depardieu, Chiwetel Eijofor, Keanu Reeves, Eva Green and many, many others. With Edmund Caldecott, Constantine runs the website

Spoken Ink, dedicated to short audios for download, and for which he has recorded a number of short stories himself.



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1	1-1	The Idiot	8:32	23	3-7	Myshkin turned round quickly...	12:04
2	1-2	Such omniscient gentlemen are to be found...	9:06	24	3-8	Chapter 8	11:32
3	1-3	'But perhaps I do know!' said the official...	9:40	25	4-1	The other gentleman...	10:30
4	1-4	Chapter 2	12:55	26	4-2	Varya came back into the room...	9:36
5	1-5	The prince's conversation seemed simple enough...	11:52	27	4-3	Chapter 9	11:25
6	1-6	Chapter 3	6:31	28	4-4	Ferdyshtchenko took hold of the general...	11:32
7	1-7	'Tell me, how do you intend to live meanwhile...'	7:54	29	4-5	Chapter 10	8:40
8	1-8	Myshkin heard all this conversation...	6:02	30	4-6	Nastasya Filippovna suddenly laughed...	7:22
9	2-1	On the thick sheet of vellum...	8:49	31	4-7	Chapter 11	11:18
10	2-2	Chapter 4	11:55	32	5-1	Ganya smiled sarcastically to himself...	6:19
11	2-3	It happened once at the beginning of winter...	8:03	33	5-2	Chapter 12	12:56
12	2-4	Five years of life in Petersburg had followed...	7:41	34	5-3	The meeting with Kolya...	10:40
13	2-5	Nastasya Filippovna's answer...	9:10	35	5-4	Chapter 13	11:33
14	2-6	Chapter 5	10:03	36	5-5	At the door of the drawing room...	12:47
15	2-7	Alexandra and Aglaia sat down on a little sofa...	10:14	37	5-6	Chapter 14	6:24
16	2-8	'There may be two opinions about life in prison,'...	8:00	38	5-7	'It has happened to me, friends, as to everyone...'	6:47
17	3-1	'Tell us about the execution,' Adelaïda interrupted.	9:33	39	5-8	With an extraordinary air of dignity...	6:27
18	3-2	Chapter 6	8:08	40	6-1	'As soon as I arrived I sent the bouquet up...'	7:41
19	3-3	'Now this is what happened...'	9:20	41	6-2	Chapter 15	13:09
20	3-4	'But it was after the funeral...'	7:03	42	6-3	This, friends, is a hundred thousand rubles,'...	11:02
21	3-5	Chapter 7	6:42	43	6-4	Chapter 16	8:40
22	3-6	As soon as Ganya was left alone...	9:32	44	6-5	Ptitysin bent his head and looked on the ground...	9:23



45	6-6	'Good heavens!' was heard on all sides.
46	6-7	Part Two
47	6-8	A month after Myshkin's departure...
48	7-1	Lizaveta Prokofyevna too had received...
49	7-2	After Myshkin's departure Kolya Ivolgin...
50	7-3	Chapter 2
51	7-4	Everybody laughed.
52	7-5	'I've been lying here for the last three days...'
53	7-6	And Lebedyev took Myshkin's hand...
54	7-7	Chapter 3
55	7-8	It was a big room, lofty and dark...
56	7-9	'I tell you it was so,' Rogozhin repeated quietly...
57	8-1	'I am very glad of that, Parfyon,' said Myshkin...
58	8-2	Chapter 4
59	8-3	Chapter 5
60	8-4	He thought this, sitting on a seat under a tree...
61	8-5	Yes, he was already in the Petrogradski District...
62	8-6	There was a moment at the end of that long...
63	8-7	Chapter 6
64	8-8	At that moment Kolya entered the verandah...
65	9-1	Lizaveta Prokofyevna flushed.
66	9-2	Chapter 7
67	9-3	Mutual courtesies were exchanged...
68	9-4	The excitement and expectation was general...
69	9-5	Chapter 8
70	9-6	'That – that passes my comprehension!'
71	9-7	When Kolya had finished reading...
72	10-1	After the speech made by Lebedyev's nephew...
73	10-2	'You are not simply naive, prince, you go beyond...'
74	10-3	Chapter 9
75	10-4	'This is really insupportable!' Lebedyev's nephew...
76	10-5	The girls stood on one side, almost scared...
77	10-6	Chapter 10
78	10-7	'Now he is choking!' Lizaveta Prokofyevna...
79	11-1	'It's late!' Ippolit suddenly got up...
80	11-2	Lizaveta Prokofyevna spoke with excitement...
81	11-3	Chapter 11
82	11-4	From Vera Lebedyev, Myshkin learned...
83	11-5	Myshkin began at last to feel not exactly sorry...
84	11-6	Late in the evening, after ten o'clock...
85	11-7	Chapter 12
86	11-8	Part Three
87	12-1	At the beginning of our narrative we mentioned...
88	12-2	Myshkin really was almost pale...
89	12-3	He broke off in confusion.
90	12-4	Chapter 2
91	12-5	Yevgeny Pavlovitch Radomsky seemed...
92	12-6	On the way from the station to the bandstand...
93	12-7	Chapter 3
94	13-1	Ivan Fyodorovitch, himself, came downstairs...
95	13-2	Left alone at the crossroads...
96	13-3	The crunch of slow footsteps on the sand...
97	13-4	Chapter 4
98	13-5	'You've come about something else, too...?'
99	13-6	Gavril Ardalionovitch was in a particularly...
100	13-7	'It may be true, gentlemen,' observed Myshkin...
101	13-8	Chapter 5
102	14-1	Vera looked in alarm at the coin...



9:06	103	14-2	The reading began at last.	10:08
7:50	104	14-3	'Gentlemen,' said Ippolit, suddenly breaking off...	9:36
6:36	105	14-4	Chapter 6	9:03
6:09	106	14-5	'There are people who derive extraordinary...'	11:06
7:58	107	14-6	'"Anyone who attacks individual charity," ...'	10:28
7:43	108	14-7	'The picture represented Christ...'	8:37
6:34	109	14-8	Chapter 7	9:10
7:22	110	15-1	There is, in extreme cases, a pitch...	10:14
10:12	111	15-2	He quickly caught up a glass from the table...	12:07
8:04	112	15-3	Chapter 8	8:21
8:55	113	15-4	Aglaia suddenly crimsoned with pleasure.	8:20
10:19	114	15-5	She did not turn red this time, but turned pale...	12:54
6:05	115	15-6	Chapter 9	14:50
13:54	116	16-1	'I must admit, Lebedyev, this distresses me...'	7:48
9:21	117	16-2	'What folly!' Myshkin said, almost angrily...	6:50
6:11	118	16-3	'For the sake of clearness, I will explain to you...'	6:04
10:25	119	16-4	Chapter 10	10:28
7:27	120	16-5	At last Myshkin came out of the darkness...	5:27
9:33	121	16-6	Part Four	9:12
10:57	122	16-7	Gavril Ardalionovitch had taken the first step...	11:37
14:34	123	16-8	Ganya listened very attentively...	11:09
7:13	124	16-9	Chapter 2	3:35
7:23	125	17-1	At that moment Kolya set a chair for him...	7:21
7:57	126	17-2	Ippolit too felt a qualm...	10:56
9:57	127	17-3	Chapter 3	9:12
6:19	128	17-4	Myshkin observed his visitor, if not with surprise...	9:02
7:53	129	17-5	Lebedyev put on a dignified air.	11:01
9:11	130	17-6	Chapter 4	7:28
9:26	131	17-7	'But did you really...?' Myshkin began...	7:52
9:37	132	17-8	The general, of course, had been repeating...	8:16
9:50	133	18-1	'All that is extremely interesting,'...	12:32
11:01	134	18-2	Chapter 5	9:24
7:02	135	18-3	The upshot of it was that they must keep calm...	12:28
8:25	136	18-4	'This is an important matter, though...'	12:09
7:29	137	18-5	'And again, that evening, there was something...'	10:15
9:19	138	18-6	Chapter 6	9:46
8:26	139	18-7	Myshkin was in a fever all night.	6:14
8:14	140	19-1	As he was continually mixing one thing up...	9:50
8:54	141	19-2	Sitting down and looking round, he for his part...	12:55
8:07	142	19-3	Chapter 7	11:27
14:10	143	19-4	The old man evidently wanted to study Myshkin...	9:27
6:43	144	19-5	But at this point an incident took place...	9:49
12:45	145	19-6	She was on the verge of being angry...	11:49
10:00	146	19-7	Chapter 8	8:38
11:03	147	20-1	Just half an hour after the Epanchins' visit...	12:00
8:15	148	20-2	Ippolit went out.	11:53
9:48	149	20-3	Aglaia paused for a moment as though amazed.	11:47
9:35	150	20-4	Chapter 9	8:01
7:26	151	20-5	Thus, we know for a fact that during that...	9:45
8:51	152	20-6	At this point, without mincing matters...	12:47
8:17	153	20-7	Chapter 10	4:14
9:41	154	21-1	Next day Keller called on Myshkin...	14:38
6:35	155	21-2	On the day before the wedding...	14:34
8:24	156	21-3	Chapter 11	8:39
9:56	157	21-4	Rogozhin had not come back...	9:46
11:40	158	21-5	The key was already in his hand.	6:32
7:32	159	21-6	'For if,' Rogozhin began...	10:32
4:57	160	21-7	Chapter 12: Conclusion	9:14

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The Idiot

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

'I know for sure that if I had two or three secure years for this novel... I would write a work that they would talk about for a hundred years.' So said Dostoyevsky as he struggled to bring *The Idiot* into existence, and sure enough it has lasted longer than the hundred years he predicted. In his creation of Prince Myshkin, *The Idiot*, a character seeking perfection and yet fraught with ambiguity, Dostoyevsky anticipated the universal metaphysical unease of succeeding generations, and produced an unforgettable masterpiece.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky was born in Moscow in 1821. His father was a physician and he was the second son of seven children. After leaving school he studied at the Military Engineering College in St Petersburg, graduating as an officer. His first story was published to great acclaim in 1846, but in 1849 he was arrested and sentenced to death for his involvement in the 'Petrashevsky circle', a group of naive, radical intellectuals who modelled themselves on French socialists such as Fourier. The Tsar ordered a public 'execution', an eloquent account of which is given by Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*, and at the moment of execution the proceedings were halted and the sentences commuted to hard labour in Siberia.

In 1863 Dostoyevsky travelled abroad and met Mlle Suslova, whom he subsequently married. He became addicted to gambling, which plunged him into debt, and it was his second wife, Anna Grigoryevna who helped him out of his financial difficulties. He returned to Russia in 1873 and died there in 1881. His most important works were *Notes from the Underground* (1864), *Crime and Punishment* (1865–66), *The Gambler* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), *The Devils* (1871) and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880).

Dostoyevsky faced gargantuan problems when writing the book. He went through at least eight plans and many variations of each plan. Just before submitting the first part to his publisher, he destroyed most of what he had written and virtually started writing the novel again. It was written in Geneva, Vevey, Milan and Florence, between bouts of gambling, grinding poverty and recurrent epileptic fits.

After four years in a Swiss clinic where he was treated for epilepsy, Prince Myshkin returns by train to St Petersburg. On the journey, he meets Parfyon Rogozhin with whom he strikes up a friendship and who tells him about the beautiful Nastasya Filippovna, with whom he is in love.

On arriving in Petersburg, the prince, penniless and bedraggled, goes to find a distant and wealthy relative, Mrs Epanchin. She and her husband and their three daughters befriend this strangely naive and sickly character, and he goes to lodge with General Epanchin's secretary, Ganya. Ganya wants to marry Aglaia, one of Mrs Epanchin's daughters, mostly for her money, but is also involved with

the notorious Nastasya Filippovna who is living under the protection of Totsky, a man she does not love. Prince Myshkin pities this neurotic and emotional woman and, during a bizarre incident at her birthday party, offers to marry her. Instead, she runs off with Rogozhin who also turns up at the party. Later, when Nastasya leaves Rogozhin, he swears to kill Prince Myshkin, as he is convinced that Nastasya is in love with him.

Prince Myshkin becomes the victim of an extortion attempt, but when he successfully refutes the charges, he offers to give money to his accuser, thus confirming Mrs Epanchin's view that he is 'an idiot'. Meanwhile, Aglaia falls in love with Prince Myshkin and, after hiding her feelings at first, she is eventually engaged to him. At a party to celebrate the betrothal, Prince Myshkin commits the ultimate social blunder of having an epileptic fit. Aglaia and Nastasya strike up a correspondence, and Aglaia asks Prince Myshkin to visit Nastasya with her. After a hectic and turbulent argument, Nastasya faints, Prince Myshkin runs to her aid and Aglaia, feeling rejected, flees and refuses to see Prince Myshkin.

Nastasya agrees to marry Prince Myshkin, but at the very last moment, she is swept away by Rogozhin. Prince Myshkin pursues them to Petersburg. After a long search, he finds Rogozhin and although he fears for his life, nothing could have prepared him for the final brutal end. Even then he is still able to forgive, but at a very high price.

Dostoyevsky desperately wanted to write a novel about a 'good' man, but feared he was not up to the task; in the initial plan Myshkin was a proud and demonic figure. Dostoyevsky's notebooks show an author desperately in search of a subject through countless changes of plot and characterisation, but it was in its seventh plan that he finally found his 'beautiful' Idiot. However, the character retains layers of ambiguity that remain from the complicated process of his creation. His humility can be seen as overbearing and, in the end, destructive and Myshkin is finally left devoid of being: a demented idiot. His epilepsy is also crucial. It is both his salvation and a limitation; it prevents him from following his ideas through completely, and from being taken as a fully participating member of the society in which he finds himself. He is both part of the world, and yet part of another metaphysical plane, revealed to him at the onset of a seizure. So baffling and opaque is the character of Prince Myshkin that he embodies the whole range of human existence, and readers will puzzle over him and the true meaning of this book for many years to come.

Notes by Heather Godwin