

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

Leo Tolstoy  
**The Cossacks**

THE  
COMPLETE  
CLASSICS

UNABRIDGED

CLASSIC  
FICTION

Read by **Jonathan Oliver**



NA613112d

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1	Chapter 1	5:08
2	The man in the fur-lined coat...	5:52
3	Chapter 2	4:40
4	He meditated on the use...	4:32
5	And now his farming and work in the country...	5:52
6	And there, among the mountains, she appeared...	2:51
7	Chapter 3	3:17
8	The mountains and the clouds appeared...	3:38
9	Chapter 4	5:11
10	All Cossacks make their own wine...	5:47
11	Chapter 5	5:13
12	From the dairy chimney rises a thin cloud...	4:58
13	Chapter 6	3:54
14	Lukáshka, who stood on the watch-tower...	4:34
15	'What have you seen? Tell us!'	3:47
16	Chapter 7	3:14
17	'Get along with you! What a thing to make a fuss about!'	4:23
18	Chapter 8	3:48
19	The night was dark, warm, and still.	4:06
20	'Time to wake them,' thought Lukáshka...	3:35

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21	'I've killed an abrék...'	3:27
22	Chapter 9	4:34
23	The Chechén had been shot in the head.	3:10
24	'Drink, lads! I'll stand you a pail!'	3:36
25	Chapter 10	4:52
26	'You should speak to the Chief of the Village!'	3:28
27	'Good-day to you. Mother!'	2:43
28	Chapter 11	2:54
29	'He's kissed his dog and licked the jug!'	3:53
30	Daddy Eróshka bowed down before the icons...	3:17
31	Chapter 12	2:43
32	'You, an old man – and say such things,' replied Olénin.	3:18
33	Chapter 13	4:22
34	'Have you come for long?' asked a woman...	5:00
35	The soldiers passed by in silence...	3:24
36	The approaching footsteps of a woman...	3:49
37	Chapter 14	5:54
38	Chapter 15	5:49
39	Eróshka, rousing himself, raised his head...	4:28
40	Chapter 16	5:01

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41	'May Christ save you!' said the old man...	4:08
42	They were silent for a while.	4:39
43	Chapter 17	3:36
44	The dumb woman's face flushed with pleasure...	3:51
45	Chapter 18	4:48
46	Daddy Eróshka gazed at his feet...	3:45
47	The cornet bowed, shook hands with Olénin, and went out.	3:37
48	'But how about this? When I was walking up...'	4:12
49	Chapter 19	3:51
50	Having picked up the pheasants they went on.	3:56
51	Chapter 20	4:29
52	He felt his pheasants, examined them...	3:50
53	He took up his gun...	3:29
54	Chapter 21	5:36
55	'Which of you is Luka Gavrilov?' asked the captain.	5:06
56	Chapter 22	5:02
57	It had grown quite dark...	3:56
58	Olénin looked out of the window...	3:48
59	Chapter 23	4:22
60	Once during the summer...	4:12

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61	Chapter 24	4:41
62	Olénin felt surprised that Belétski...	5:01
63	It was growing dusk and Olénin began thinking...	4:24
64	Olénin sent Belétski's orderly...	3:50
65	Chapter 25	3:42
66	Olénin no longer felt awkward...	3:37
67	Chapter 26	3:01
68	Olénin had entered into the life of the Cossack village...	3:49
69	Chapter 27	3:53
70	He darted into the yard past Olénin's very window...	3:10
71	Chapter 28	3:39
72	Olénin looked at him again, smiled, and went on writing.	3:20
73	The peculiar sound of his voice made Olénin look round.	4:17
74	Chapter 29	4:24
75	The air above the vineyard smelt unpleasant...	4:14
76	Chapter 30	3:02
77	'Do tell me just this once what has passed between you...'	3:31
78	Chapter 31	3:29
79	He was ill at ease alone with Maryánka...	3:06
80	Chapter 32	4:00

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81	Olénin recognised Nazárka, and was silent...	3:18
82	Chapter 33	4:10
83	'Three months have passed since I first saw...'	4:13
84	'I tried to throw myself into that kind of life...'	5:05
85	Chapter 34	3:46
86	A few minutes later some visitors arrived...	4:12
87	Chapter 35	4:58
88	Belétski's hut looked out onto the square.	4:51
89	Chapter 36	3:08
90	Lukáshka had appeared particularly merry.	3:58
91	Chapter 37	5:31
92	Chapter 38	3:44
93	'Why did you not tell me sooner?' said Belétski.	3:58
94	And through the darkness her eyes gleamed brightly...	4:24
95	Chapter 39	4:14
96	Chapter 40	4:28
97	The men rode almost silently.	4:30
98	Chapter 41	4:37
99	The Chechéns with their red hair...	3:42
100	Chapter 42	3:39
101	'Was it very painful?' repeated Olénin...	4:11
102	'Listen to me, and keep farther away...'	4:27

**Total time: 7:02:58**

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# Leo Tolstoy

## (1828–1910)

# The Cossacks

‘The unexamined life is not worth living,’ stated Socrates, who believed that self-examination and the open discussion of truth were essential if a life were to have any value. Tolstoy claimed early in his literary life that the hero of his books was and always would be truth, and his life was dedicated, in an unswerving (and rather unforgiving) way, to his conception of truth. In the process he questioned society’s morals and ethics, the prevailing social, educational and religious conventions, and much else besides. His own life was profoundly examined too, with much of that examination involving agonised self-reproach and angry renunciation.

The reproach and renunciation were over a period of his life during which he lived with abandon, taking advantage of his high status to drink, lie, cheat, gamble (and lose, of course), rob, commit adultery and even murder. Such was his position

that this was seen as no more than usual for a man of his class, but for Leo Tolstoy that was never going to be sufficient excuse for failing to find and follow a moral code.

He had always had a rebellious and introspective element to his character. Born into a noble if no longer hugely wealthy family in 1828, he spent his happy early years – and much of his adult life – on the estate Yasnaya Polyana. By the time he went to university, he had experienced the deaths of his father, mother and guardian Aunt Aline, had moved from the country to Moscow, and had developed both a love of European literature and a great linguistic talent. He had also developed an independence of intellect that translated itself into an anti-authoritarian attitude. He left the University of Kazan before graduating, despairing at its conventionality, and started finding

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out about life for himself. Initially this was through the formalised but none the less wild activities of young noblemen of the time (balls, parties, gambling, duelling, racing); but it went farther, possibly deeper, than that with Tolstoy. There was a kind of demonic addiction to the thrills which sometimes gives his diaries a rather Jekyll-and-Hyde character. He was later profoundly disquieted at his debauchery, wrote endless rules of behaviour and codes of practice for himself, and then failed to follow them, falling again for the brutish attractions of the high life. But he never stopped trying to change himself, and never ceased to be deeply troubled by his moral failings. Perhaps most remarkably, in the end he did change himself; and he was able to put into practice his convictions about life, living and following a personal code of honour and morality. The inspiration for this change was – in part at least – the same inspiration as for *The Cossacks*.

In 1851 his brother Nikolai (an officer in the army) had visited the estate, and Tolstoy took the opportunity to go on a tour of the Caucasus region with him.

That tour made an impact on Tolstoy's life in several crucial ways. He decided to join up, for a start (he had always admired his brother), and his Army experiences were to change his views of himself and the world at large. They would also form the basis for much of the material in his first published writings, and then most famously in *War and Peace*. And it was his experiences of riding through the Caucasus region that directly inspired *The Cossacks*, a book which marked a shift in Tolstoy's range and intention as an author.

Much of *The Cossacks* is immediately evident as autobiography – a disenchanting nobleman joins the Army, goes to the Caucasus, is swept up in the beauty of the region and the simple goodness of the peasantry, and realises the vapid immorality of the social elite and their doings in Moscow. But Tolstoy spent 10 years working on *The Cossacks*, which is a long time even for a serving soldier faced with the Crimean War. In the novella, which was eventually published in 1863, Tolstoy developed what was to become a feature of his fictional writing thereafter, a moral searching and open discussion of

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issues deeply important to the individual as well as to society as a whole. His diaries, his anti-authoritarian sentiments, his self-criticism, his questing for a moral path – all these found expression in the novella, and were to be the foundations of his later fictional work.

Although now revered for his artistry as a writer, in later life Tolstoy was seen more as a prophet. He turned from fiction to essays, tracts and spiritual writings, which in particular advocated non-violence. He had determined that a relatively simple philosophy of life was sufficient guide: live only for God and for others; do no harm; live simply and honestly. Quite apart from this making him a heretic to the Orthodox Church, it also required the abandonment of property and money, and abstinence from drink, meat, tobacco and sex. It left him living as a kind of symbiotic lodger with his wife, Sophia, who had borne much. Despite initially being happy together, after 13 children and the difficulties of living with Tolstoy's intense, self-hating self-absorption, the couple were famously unhappy. When Tolstoy became a wandering ascetic, this was in

part because of his convictions, and also because he found the angry rows at home intolerable. He was taken ill at a train station in November 1910, but refused to allow Sophia in to see him. He died a few days later, still wracked by shame and guilt for having enjoyed wealth and ease at the expense of others. For Leo Tolstoy, even the end of life was not left unexamined.

### **Notes by Roy McMillan**



**Jonathan Oliver's** theatre credits include *War and Peace*, *The Homecoming*, *The Master and Margarita*, *Julius Caesar* and the role of Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. His television credits include *Eskimo Day*, *The House of Eliott* and *Hannay*. He has, for a decade, recorded audiobooks for the Royal National Institute for the Blind. He has read *Frankenstein* and *Ivanhoe* for Naxos AudioBooks.

## Credits

Produced by Genevieve Helsby  
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Edited by Malcolm Blackmoor

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Cover picture: *Cossacks in a winter landscape*, Anton Baumgartner-Stoiloff; courtesy  
of The Bridgeman Art Library

# Leo Tolstoy

# The Cossacks

Read by **Jonathan Oliver**

Dissolute, disenchanted Dmitri Olénin decides to join the Army as a cadet and is despatched to the Caucasus. There, he is transformed by seeing how the indigenous people live in harmony with nature, how their lives have more meaning than those of the superficial social elite in Moscow, and he finds a new sense of self and purpose.

But nothing is ever quite that simple. Love and loyalty are tested to the very limits in this semi-autobiographical novella, which is one of Tolstoy's best-loved works.



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Total time  
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