**Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky - the famous Russian novelist.**



**Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky** (November 11, 1821 – February 9, 1881) was a nineteenth century [Russian novelist](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Russian_literature%22%20%5Co%20%22Russian%20literature) considered by many critics to be among the greatest writers of his or any age.

**1.** Dostoevsky was the second of six children born to Mikhail and Maria Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's father Mikhail was a retired military surgeon and a violent alcoholic. He lost his parents when he was young. His mother died of tuberculosis in 1837. Fyodor's father died in 1839.

**2.** Shortly after their mother’s death, Dostoevsky and his brother were sent to the Military Engineering Academy at Saint Petersburg.

**3.** When alive his fatherworked at a hospital in one of the city's worst areas with a cemetery for criminals, a lunatic asylum, and an orphanage for abandoned infants. Such terrible pictures of people’s life made a lasting impression on the young Dostoevsky, who got interested in and compassioned for the poor, whose sufferings were awful.

**4.** Dostoevsky had epilepsy and his first seizure occurred when he was nine years old. Epileptic seizures recurred throughout his life, and Dostoyevsky's experiences are thought to have formed the basis for his description of Prince Myshkin's epilepsy in his novel *The Idiot* and that of Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, among others.

**5.** Dostoevsky started to write his own fiction in late 1844 after leaving the army. In 1845, his first work, the short novel, *Poor Folk*, published in the periodical *The Contemporary* (Sovremennik), was a great success. As legend has it, the editor of the magazine, poet Nikolai Nekrasovsaid "a new [Gogol](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Nikolai_Gogol%22%20%5Co%20%22Nikolai%20Gogol) has arisen!" Dostoevsky became a literary celebrity at the age of 24. However, in 1846 after his novella, The Double, Dostoyevsky's fame began to cool.

**6.** Dostoevsky was arrested and imprisoned on April 23, 1849 for being a part of the liberal intellectual group, the Petrashevsky Circle.  Dostoevsky was [sentenced to death](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Death_sentence%22%20%5Co%20%22Death%20sentence). After a mock execution, in which he and other members of the group stood outside in freezing weather waiting to be shot by a firing squad, Dostoyevsky's sentence was changed to four years of [exile](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Exile%22%20%5Co%20%22Exile) with hard labor at a katorga prison camp in Omsk, Siberia. Dostoevsky described later to his brother the sufferings he went through as the years in which he was "shut up in a coffin."

**7.** He was released from prison in 1854. Dostoevsky spent the following five years at the fortress of Semipalatinsk, now in [Kazakhstan](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Kazakhstan%22%20%5Co%20%22Kazakhstan). While there, he began a relationship with Maria Dmitrievna Isayeva, the wife of an acquaintance in Siberia. They married in February 1857, after her husband's death.

**8.** In 1860, he returned to St. Petersburg, where he began a successful literary journal, *Time,* with his older brother, Mikhail. Then it was shut down by the government for publishing an unfortunate article by their friend, Nikolai Strakhov. They began another unsuccessful journal, *Epoch.* Dostoevsky was devastated by his wife's death in 1864, followed by his brother's death. Financially ruined by business debts and the need to provide for his brother's widow and children, Dostoevsky sank into a deep depression, gambling and accumulating massive losses at the tables. Dostoevsky suffered from an acute gambling compulsion. By one account *[Crime and Punishment](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Crime_and_Punishment%22%20%5Co%20%22Crime%20and%20Punishment),* possibly his best-known novel, was completed in a mad hurry because Dostoevsky was in urgent need of money from his publisher. He had been left practically penniless after a gambling spree.

**9.** Dostoevsky traveled to Western Europe, motivated by the dual wish to escape his creditors at home and to visit the casinos abroad, where he met Anna Snitkina, a 20-year-old stenographer whom he married in 1867. With her help Dostoevsky wrote some of the greatest novels ever written, including *The Brothers Karamazov.* From 1873 to 1881 he published a monthly journal titled the *Writer's Diary.* The journal was an enormous success.

 Dostoevsky had four children: two died in infancy while the other two survived the 1917 revolution. In his later years, Fyodor Dostoevsky lived at the resort of Staraya Russa. He died on February 9, 1881, and was interred in Tikhvin Cemetery at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, St. Petersburg, [Russia](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Russia).