

Senior Honors English - Rohlf's
Crime and Punishment Essay Topics

Consider these major themes in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment:

- *Raskolnikov's personal schism*, reflecting part extreme rationalism and the other extreme emotionalism, one indolent, cruel and disturbed, and one kind, sensitive and emotional. Does this reflect more than just a single character's personality? Is it reflective of something larger?
- *Women saving men*. A repeating theme throughout the novel, from Sonja to Dunya, women make sacrifices for the men they love or the family they love.
- *Dostoevsky rejects Western ideas, social models and theories*, that they could be applied to Russian society, which requires its own special spiritual and practical methods.
- *Freedom vs. slavery*. What enslaves these characters? Is freedom possible, or even desirable? What kind of freedom?
- *Illness, decay and disease*. Both Katerina Marmeladov and Raskolnikov suffer from physical and mental disease.
- *The role of love*. Raskolnikov is unable to love himself, and from that, others. Why is this missing in his mental make-up? Its significance?
- *Psychology of crime*. How different is Raskolnikov from other "normal" people? How does he distinguish himself from other people? Does this contribute to this crime? How?
- *Egosim and the "Napoleonic complex."* Raskolnikov convinces himself that his crime cannot be judged with the same moral code that applies to mere mortals.
- *Pride as the Original Sin*. Raskolnikov's arrogance undermines his very self.

Choose from the above themes, and write an analytical essay that thoroughly explores your topic, critically considers the essential ideas behind the theme, and reveals your own expert engagement not only with the text, but also with a parallel example of a movie or television show.

Remember to support commentary/opinion with textual evidence (document correctly!), demonstrate a consistent logic that shapes sequence, and utilize the text in addition to a movie or television show.

(Hints for organization: possibly parallel novel-to-movie/television character decisions, focus analysis around a literary guidepost similarity between genres, work to evaluate how an entire television series is created from specific examples from Dostoevsky's text . . . other ideas . . .)