



War and Peace

Leo Tolstoy (1828 - 1910) Translated by Aylmer and Louise Maude

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	3MP3 CDs in DVD case
Length:	64 hours and 22 minutes	Catalog:	DB-3002
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Genre:	Historical Fiction		

Leo Tolstoy began *War and Peace* in 1862, the same year he married his bride, Sophia, and settled down on his estate, Yasnaya Polyana. He finished a first draft in 1863 and continued writing until 1869, when he started a major rewrite that took three more years to complete. He worked in a small room on a small circular table, writing in a thick, cramped hand incomprehensible to anyone except his wife, who dutifully transcribed his work every night. The novel, one of the most famous in world literature, concerns the lives of members of five families in Russia during the reign of Tsar Alexander when Napoleon invaded Russia. Tolstoy did not regard it as a novel, per se, but as a work that encompassed philosophy and historical analysis. Its brilliance lies in Tolstoy's ability to deal with the imminent as well as the

transcendent with equal skill. As with creation itself, the scope can be as broad as the plains of Smolensk or as focused as the slight shiver that touches the upper lip of Bolkonsky's wife when she is about to cry. The book can be likened to nourishment, in that, perhaps more than any other book extant, it offers the reader a diet of life itself, in all its many phases, hearts, faces and souls. One should be no more put off by its length than one who stands in awe of the ocean's depth or heaven's height. *(Summary by Michael Hogan)*

Leo Tolstoy (1828 – 1910) was born to a noble Russian family. His parents died when he was a still a boy. Relatives raised him, and he was wealthy and free to live the dissolute life of a young man of society in Moscow and St. Petersburg. After gambling away a small fortune he left for the Caucasus to fight in the Crimean War. In the Caucasus Tolstoy, a failed student without any evident promise, began to write. After completing several brilliant shorter works, Tolstoy married and settled down at his family's estate, Yasnaya Polyana, and began his masterpiece, *War and Peace*.

Tolstoy led a life with as broad an intellectual, philosophical and spiritual horizon as the vast spaces recounted in his books. He also led a life that wilfully indentured itself to the land and the deep down physical realities of manual labor. Was any artist so gifted and so tortured by the anomalies and incongruities of life? Was any artist more capable of reproducing life in writing, perhaps because he was so in touch with life's maddening mysteries.

Tolstoy's growth as a novelist might be less interesting than his spiritual growth, since he was deemed a fully formed genius from the publication his very first works. However, his spiritual growth from the dissolute young man to the spiritual anarchist of his latter days, who attempted to live in literal compliance with Christ's Sermon on the Mount, was long, fevered and ultimately painful. His marriage, which had begun in sunlight and favor, dissolved in bitterness and recriminations, and at the age of 82 and in poor health he left Yasnaya Polyana only to die from pneumonia in a railway station. Leo Tolstoy was a giant among men whose person encompassed an entire spectrum. He was irascible and kind, brilliant and stubborn, a glutton and an ascetic, spiritual but of the earth. His influence on writers as well as social activists like Ghandi and Martin Luther King remains immeasurable. *(Michael Hogan)*