

Writing Sample

Since the establishment of the city, man has been plagued with the dilemma of either enduring the alienating effect of city life in order to reap the benefits of modernization, or revert to a “normal” life in the country, unaware of the city life and the intricate society that undoubtedly develops as a result of harsh surroundings.

Modern-day suburbia, in America, suggests a longing for country life, at least for those who can afford it. But what of the individual who is submerged into the heart of the city, only to emerge as an alienated being who suffers due to the amount of apathy that exists? The individual lives in the Underground and sees fit to occupy his time inconsequentially. In time, everyone living in the underbelly of the city, becomes transformed into this sort of being and this, eventually leads to a dystopia of sorts where existence is perpetuated by the presence of the city-- or rather by the absence of the country.

Through the works of Dostoyevsky, Maugham, Orwell, Sartre, Hansum and T.S.Eliot, I hope to show how *The Underground Man*, though dismal, is also the key element in understanding the basic psychological and physiological needs of humans to understand life, or to provide meaning for existence. That is, the level of anonymity and eccentricity characterizing the *Underground Man* of today is a reflection of the needs society is no longer able to meet. If conditions are left unchanged, the *Underground Man* of today, will end up living in a Wasteland-like environment.

Thesis Outline

Chapter I-----> An introduction to who the underground man is: his psyche and his soul.

The expanse of an exhausted life, hovering over a dingy antique table that bears the effects of time and of the multitude of hours spent writing the infernal memoirs of an infernal man. Dust has dared settle where his inkwell dripped with disgust and anguish for his own separation from the outside world. The Underground Man, so utterly filled with torment that he cannot help being anything but himself. This is what he hates most about his person. This is what makes him both appalling and appealing to humanity:

I am a sick man...a mean man. There is nothing attractive about me, I think there is something wrong with my liver...But still, it's out of spite that I refuse to ask for the doctors' help. So my liver hurts? Good let it hurt even more!

What can you say to a man who understands his ailments, realizes the consequences of remaining sick and yet chooses not to be healed? He leaves the reader in a constant state of frustration. The reader is not even given a chance to sympathize for him. He chooses to be this way, or so he says. He has chosen to be like this for a while now:

I've been living like this for a long time, twenty years or so.

His constant state of nonchalance begins to wear off after the first few paragraphs and one begins to wonder what has made a man behave in such a manner? What hideous sin could he have committed that left him in a perpetual cycle of pathos? He tells us that he was not always this bitter:

...even when I was at my liverish worst, I was constantly aware that I was not really wicked nor even embittered, that I was simply chasing pigeons, you might say, and thus passing the time. And so I might be frothing at the mouth, but if

you had brought me a doll to play with or had offered me a nice cup of tea with sugar, chances are I would have calmed down.

The Underground Man seems to be bothered by insignificant things and apparently, is also calmed by them. But, can a grown man really be appeased by dolls and warm cups of tea? Had he been so horribly neglected during his life that his present day comfort is narrowed to superficial fancies? What a horrid man he is! He tells the reader things that forces one to empathize and then rebuts his own statements with willful wickedness:

I was always aware of many elements in me that were just the opposite of wicked. I felt that they'd been swarming inside me all my life, trying to break out, but I had refused to let them.

