

Plot the overcoat



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Running Head: Plot the Overcoat Plot the Overcoat s Plot the Overcoat by Nikolai Gogol The Overcoat is a short story written by Nikolai Gogol, who is a celebrated writer and often referred to as the father of Russian realism because of a strong realistic component in his stories. The plot of overcoat centers on a single, introverted man named Akakiy Bashmachkin; a Russian civil servant, who is extremely devoted to his job and often jeered at by his coworkers. The plot of the story follows a combination of traditional and episodic pattern, which initially starts off with a conventional introduction describing the protagonist and the main premise of the story and is then characterized by constant shifting in the scene and locale that defines various aspect of the characters and their current situations after a certain amount of time lapse. (Graffy, 2000) The story entails an exposition that defines the initial premise of the story and Akakiy's character, a passive civil servant, who is highly skilled in what he does but due to his appearance and aloof nature is often mocked by his superiors and inferiors alike. The focus of the story is then shifted towards Akakiy's overcoat that has immense significance in the story to the protagonist because the coat was symbolic of social acceptance and a new life for him. However, the overcoat also serves as the main source of conflict and complication in the story, as all the other characters of the story do not understand the significance of the coat to Akakiy. Other characters deem it as an ordinary object, which on the other hand was symbolic of social acceptance for Akakiy as mentioned earlier. Akakiy's old overcoat is ragged and does not really help to protect Akakiy from the icy cold weather of St. Petersburg. Akakiy's overcoat becomes ragged beyond repair and as a result, he is persuaded by the tailor Petrovich to buy a new overcoat. The new overcoat brings not only admiration from

the staff but the very same day Akakiy is invited to a party as well. However, Akakiy's happiness is short-lived and the same night, he is beaten by a group of hooligans, who leave him injured and then steal his brand new coat. He reports it to the local police but to no avail and they do not pay much attention to his complaint as they the coat too trivial for investigation and fail to understand the importance of the overcoat to Akakiy. Akakiy becomes extremely restless, and this point in the story is referred to as Rising action, whereby the protagonist is overwhelmed with tension and explores every option to get his coat back. Upon the suggestion of a coworker, Akakiy goes to see a high ranking official to help him find his coat; however, Akakiy enters into a confrontation with him and gets a bitter scolding that causes him to faint. This aspect of the story is referred to as a moment of crisis, where Akakiy strives really hard and reaches the conclusion that if he will plead and beg the official, he may soften and be willing to help him. However, this only ends up as a false resolution for Akakiy and the official does not help him at all. Akakiy becomes sick and in delirious state hallucinates that he is back in front of the official and in the last moments of his life, Akakiy curses him. The story then shifts to a supernatural note and few days after Akakiy's death, people start talking about a ghost scaring people in St. Petersburg and steal people's coats. The ghost has an appearance similar to Akakiy and then the climax is reached when the same official, who scolded Akakiy visit the same place and is confronted by Akakiy's spirit. The ghost scares him and makes him realize how his arrogance had brought about his death. (Gogol, 1985) This is the climactic point in the story, whereby Akakiy's spirit attains peace after scaring the official and is never seen or heard afterwards and Akakiy steals his coat in

return that fits him perfectly. For the official, this moment is a reversal of fortune as he is extremely shaken by Akakiy's ghost, loses his coat and is forced to reevaluate various traits of his personality. In the final moments of the story, there is a new ghost haunting the St. Petersburg square, however it is hinted that it is the ghost of one of the hooligans, who had mugged Akakiy earlier. (Gogol, 1985) References Graffy, J. 2000. Gogol's the Overcoat: Critical Studies in Russian Literature. London: Bristol Classical Press Nikolai G. 1985. The Overcoat. University of Chicago