

# Novel analysis essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Solzhenitsyn's first novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published in 1962 after a round of intense, routine scrutiny by Party officials. (Biography of A. Solzhenitsyn) It is autobiographical: ' Mr. Solzhenitsyn, who spent 11 years (1945-56) in various prisons, concentration camps and places of forced exile in the Soviet Union because of some disrespectful references to Stalin in private correspondence with a friend, caused a worldwide sensation in November 1962 when his first novel, " One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," was published in the magazine *Novy Mir*.' (Kramer) There Alexander Solzhenitsyn wrote his masterpiece. ' The tale involves a single day of a single man within the corrupt prison system, and, ironically, it is a good day.' (Schneider) The central figure is Ivan Denisovich Shukhov. He is a simple peasant; a prisoner of the Main Administration of Corrective Labour Camps and Colonies, which is called GULAG in Russian. We see the narration about one day of Ivan's rap. This is one of 3653 days spent in GULAG. The description of this day that the reader can see is enough to realize how people's life in that time was. With the help of this novel, the reader can see the picture of the rap's atmosphere, the rules and laws of the prisoners. This is a description of a single day of a mere person from morning till evening, who is in a camp; and that is enough to include the whole ten years of imprisonment and the whole story of camps.

GULAG rap is an underworld. It exists in a single way. It's a parallel world. Anyone, who appears here, survives or dies in his way. A reader can watch the prisoner's life from the inside. This is a narration about people who have experience in prisons firsthand. The novel strikes a reader with a deep realism. The main plot is about Ivan Denisovich's life before his arrest. He is

a generalized character of Russian prisoners in whole. Most of them have got false accusations, like Solzhenitsyn. They are the victims of the political repressions. Shukhov took part in warfare since the Great Patriotic War had started. He was an unknown hero, who became a fall prisoner. He was lucky to escape. But like most people he was committed to GULAG camps and was accused of betrayal of the Motherland.

There is a big specter of characters in the novel. The author separates the individuality of each person. These are people with different identities, worldviews, and social strata. There is only one thing which connects them – the unbearable life of the GULAG camp's reality. Despite the short narration, the author is able to show the destiny of the Russians on the example of the one man. This man becomes a victim of Stalin's regime. The novel 'One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich' narrates the reader about how the commoner copes with the reality and its ideas, which are forced to the people. There is a description of camp's everyday life with all its troubles and difficulties. The reader can see a similar plot in other masterpieces of Solzhenitsyn like 'The Gulag Archipelago'.

This very novel describes the pushback of the Stalin's regime. The punishment camp is a little cell of the big organism of the powerful, terrible, and inexorable state which is so cruel to its inhabitants. Punishment camp is a special place. The time moves on slowly there. One day is a measure. The days are the living image. Every day is monotonous. It is like the clockwork. Solzhenitsyn tries to describe the whole punishment camp's life as if it is one day. Then he uses the smallest details to reconstruct the picture of the way of life of the prisoners. Many reviewers say putting a big number of details is

Solzhenitsyn's way of writing his masterpieces which the reader sees in the other novels of the author. After each fact there is a whole plot of camp's reality. Each moment of the novel seems like the film's shot. The reader sees this shot clearly, in the smallest particulars.

The GULAG rap in which Shukhov is imprisoned, is made to destroy prisoners' physical and mental dignity. Living conditions are unbearable. There are no sheets on mattresses. The prisoners eat only two hundred grams of bread per meal. Guards force prisoners to undress for body searches at temperatures of forty below zero. These punishment camps which were during Stalin's regime also weaken its prisoners spiritually. By giving prisoners names which include the combinations of numbers and letters the GULAG raps ruin people's identity. For example, the camp guards refer to Shukhov as " Shcha-854". This is the best example of those years' system which Stalin provided. People must be a mass, who has no personal world views, no individuality at all. It is a total destruction of people with strong personality, the attempt to make the prisoners be more similar with common people.

Shukhov does not passively accept this attempt to dehumanize him, however. He remains a person in every sense of this word. He shows that he was a human from the very beginning. And any of the punishment camps cannot break him or his spirit. In everyday life of the rap Shukhov behaves himself as a normal educate person. He knows that such behavior is better for him in every sense. Creating a respectable man inside will help him to remain a person. He just fights back the system. His insistence on his own dignity amounts to an underground declaration of war against the state that

imprisons him.

One more important thing which is described in this novel is the reason of Shukhov's mates of being imprisoned. Shukhov was committed to GULAG raps and accused of betrayal of the Motherland. Ivan's fault was in escaping from enemy control only. Gopchik took milk to the bushwhackers hiding in the forests. Tyurin was the son of a rich peasant father. ' Who are the other prisoners? One is a Soviet Navy captain. His misfortune was that a British admiral sent him a Christmas present. One man is a Baptist. His crime? Being a Baptist. A youngster took a pail of milk to some Ukrainian outlaws-- and drew a 25-year sentence. In every labor gang of 20 to 30 men there are at least five or six " spies." There is even one " genuine spy" in the camp, a Moldavian who actually worked for the Germans. One man was drummed out of the Red Army as the son of a kulak or rich peasant. Later, the officers who drummed him out were shot in the purge.' (Salisbury)

It is the twenty first century now. And a reader might be surprised while reading characters' crimes. They seem odd to the people nowadays. Thus was it during the Stalin's regime. None of these crimes appears to be a serious offence. But still people were prisoners. There are the strict rules of enduring the punishment. And they seem to a reader whether silly or horrible. There is a good example as approval. Shukhov catches a cold. From the prison's authority point of view it is a total disobedience. Shukhov must spend three days in the hole for this crime. The same thing happens to Shukhov's mate, Buynovsky. He receives ten days in the hole. And his crime is odder, than Ivan's one. He wanted to warm up with a flannel vest while trying to bundle up. They do no harm, but the camp treats both as deep

violations of the law like if they are both worth of strict punishment. It seems absurd to a reader, but still these occurrence are day-to-day realities of Stalin's government. These cases show the power of the Soviet officials. They show the unfair to the common people.

An interesting thing a reader sees in the narration. There are no strict borders of the punishment camp. It seems like the rap captures the whole territory of the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn uses this literary device to emphasize the darkness of despair which fills the souls of the prisoners. The question of faith also arises in this narration. As it was told before there is one Ivan's mate, who is imprisoned because of his religion. This will concern Alyoshka. He is a Baptist. The Baptism is a branch of Christianity. If a reader draws on the history, he knows that religion was not in favor during the Stalin's regime. But many people save they belief in something unreal. This is a forbidden belief. But this crime was a salvation to Russian people. It was a secret outlet which helped humans in the period of repressions.

Shukhov does not talk or think about religion during the narration. His dialogue with Alyoshka proves that faith can be and is a means of survival. A young boy tells him about the peculiarities of the baptism, they both talk about God. This conversation distracts Ivan's attention from the everyday worries.

As it was said before, the Soviet regime was cruel and unfair. It was trying to destroy the individuality of people. Their aim was to create obedient society through the fear of government. So there is no private life. A person must not have his or her own opinion. It is strongly prohibited. If you do something – the other people and, of course, the authorities must know, what you are

doing and why.

As a general rule the same system was in the GULAG raps, too. The authorities try to make private events public in order to control over individuals. There is no private space. You cannot be alone even in a latrine. It is prohibited. Everyone must know what you are doing.

The government believes that this lack of privacy is the best way to ruin people's aim to become a person in every sense of this word. They make people's names as a code even. It is just a combination of numbers and letters. Prisoners are no longer private individuals. They are rather symbols in a public system. But this brings no success. People are trying to save their little private worlds at all costs. In an official and dehumanizing environment, each manages to keep one foot in his own private world, thereby preserving his humanity.

One more character is described in this novel. It is a cold. The cold is a metaphor of the coldness with which the authorities of the punishment camp treat the prisoners. Most of the GULAG camps are in the farthest parts of the Soviet Union territory. In this novel it is Siberia. There is a constant cold. Even in summer the weather sometimes is not warm enough to feel oneself comfortable. Here, in winter the temperature is often about forty degrees below zero. These are not good conditions to live in. Here people survive like animals. They are treated like animals. The people in this punishment camp are not only political prisoners. They are the prisoners of nature as well. They make no any attempts to escape. People understand that the prison disrupts their health. If they want to run away from the punishment camp even if there is such barrier as security the weather will do its dirty task instead of

the authorities. This combination of horrible conditions and furious weather creates the sense that the whole world is against Shukhov and his mates. They are captured there, and not only government but the nature is theirs' enemy.

Also a reader pays attention on the friendship and relations between the prisoners in whole. The punishment camps provide strict rules so there no opportunity to make friends. Sometimes there no ability even to talk to somebody. The one more fact is that all prisoners are totally different. A reader sees this separation on the example of Shukhov's mates. They are all from different parts of the country, they lived in different conditions. At least they are from distinct social stratum. But for people living in GULAG camps it is not a problem to make bonds. The prisoners know they must spy one another. There is a reward system in such punishment camps. If a prisoner inform on someone he will have a reward for this. Nevertheless, there are tight relationships among many of the prisoners. There is always a risk. A person whom you trust can be a whistler. But the prisoners do not want to create new troubles among themselves. They may be separated by particulars, but they are all united with restrained.

' The end of an unclouded day. Almost a happy one. Just one of the 3, 653 days of his sentence, from bell to bell. The extra three were for leap years.' Shukhov meditates that his day has been almost happy. The narrator adds that this day has been just one of the 3, 653 days of Shukhov's sentence. This is the end of the story.

In conclusion it can be said that this very novel is a description not only one person's day in punishment camp but a life of the people in the epoch of



Stalin's repressions. By means of Shukhov and his mates a reader sees establish and system of the GULAG raps which were in the Soviet Union. A reader notices transformations of people or their constancy of world view. There is a system of characters that a reader watches during the narration. The one who reads this novel falls in the atmosphere of those times. A narrate gets acquainted with day-to-day realities of prisoners. He sees the picture of the real GULAG rap's environment. A reader whether sympathized or does not understand the behavior of each personality. But it will be true that a reader will be filled with admiration for this novel. ' A short, simply-told tale about a prisoner trying to survive the Gulag - the Soviet labor camp system - it is now regarded as one of the most significant books of the 20th Century.' (Rosenberg)

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