

**Title:** Innocents in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*  
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My paper looks at the role of innocence in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and makes three points: first, that the plot is designed to valorize innocence (in a particular sense defined by Tolstoy) over experience, insight, or panoramic vision; second, that it aims to persuade the reader, primarily via the characters Natasha and Pierre, that innocence is a viable way of life for *adults*, a somewhat surprising stance since the innocent are generally assumed to be ill-equipped for the business of grown-up life even in earlier Tolstoy; but third, that to do so, it must covertly defend and protect both characters in ways denied other characters, via coincidence and various other *deus ex machina* devices whose artificiality casts the actual viability of innocence into doubt. A separate part of the paper will examine some unexpected ways innocence functions in readers' moral evaluations and how a narrative tool of this sort suits a project like *War and Peace*. The topic is largely absent from criticism, though a few scholars, for example S. G. Bocharov, touch on it, and almost all obliquely acknowledge its existence in one way or another.