

Worksheet 4. Comparing/Contrasting Translations

Name: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Class: _____

Read the excerpts from the following three popular translations of *Crime and Punishment*. Make marginal notes to highlight differences in diction (word choices) and syntax (phrase and sentence structures). Consider the extent to which the versions do or do not present similar views of Raskolnikov (Rodion). Using textual evidence identify two similarities and two differences.

Translation 1.

I have known Rodion for a year and a half; he is morose, gloomy, proud and haughty, and of late—and perhaps for a long time before—he has been suspicious and fanciful. He has a noble nature and a kind heart. He does not like showing his feelings and would rather do a cruel thing than open his heart freely. Sometimes, though, he is not at all morbid, but simply cold and inhumanly callous; it's as though he were alternating between two characters. Sometimes he is fearfully reserved! He says that he is so busy that everything is a hindrance, and yet he lies in bed doing nothing. He doesn't jeer at things, not because he hasn't the wit, but as though he hadn't time to waste on such trifles. He never listens to what is said to him. He is never interested in what interests other people at any given moment. He thinks very highly of himself, and perhaps he is right.

(Garnett, Constance, trans. 1950. *Crime and Punishment*. New York: Random House. 250–51)

Translation 2.

I've known Rodion for a year and a half: sullen, gloomy, arrogant, proud; recently (and maybe much earlier) insecure and hypochondriac. Magnanimous and kind. Doesn't like voicing his feelings, and would rather do something cruel than speak his heart out in words.

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At times, however, he is not a hypochondriac at all, but just inhumanly cold and callous, as if there really were two opposing characters in him, changing places with each other. At times he is terribly taciturn! He's always in a hurry, always too busy, yet he lies there doing nothing. Not given to mockery, and not because he lacks sharpness but as if he had no time for such trifles. Never hears people out to the end. Is never interested in what interests everyone else at a given moment. Sets a terribly high value on himself and, it seems, not without a certain justification.

(Pevear, Richard and Larissa Volokhonsky, trans. 1993. *Crime and Punishment*. New York: Random House. 215)

Translation 3.

I've known Rodion for one and a half years; he's a morose sort of chap—gloomy, standoffish and proud; recently (and for all I know not so recently, as well) he's been over-anxious, with a tendency to hypochondria. But sometimes it's not hypochondria at all that he's suffering from, he's simply cold and unfeeling, to the point of inhumanity, it's really just as though there were two opposing characters alternating within him. He's sometimes unconscionably short on conversation! It's all: "I've no time, stop bothering me," yet he just lies there not doing anything. He doesn't mock, yet it's not because he doesn't have enough wit, but rather as if he didn't have enough time for such trivial matters. He doesn't listen to what people say to him. He's never interested in what everyone else is interested in at any given moment. He has a fearfully high opinion of himself, and perhaps not entirely without justification.

(McDuff, David, trans. 2003. *Crime and Punishment*. New York: Penguin Books. 256–57)