

0. DOSTOEVSKY the GAMBLER - Story Preface

1. WHO WAS DOSTOEVSKY?

2. ST. PETERSBURG - BEGINNINGS

3. LIFE in ST. PETERSBURG

4. ARRESTED

5. DEATH SENTENCE

6. DOSTOEVSKY in LOVE

7. DOSTOEVSKY the GAMBLER

8. TRAGEDIES in DOSTOEVSKY'S LIFE

9. SAVED - BY STENOGRAPHY

10. FALLING IN LOVE

11. FROM SECRETARY to WIFE

12. TIMELY WRITING; UNTIMELY DEATH



Even while he was struggling with his gambling addiction, Dostoevsky was still writing. This facsimile image depicts a page from his 1867 manuscript, "The Idiot."

Agreeing to meet Polina in France, Dostoevsky delayed his trip as he continued his bets on the Wiesbaden roulette wheel.

Not one to wait for something that may never happen, Polina turned her attentions elsewhere - and fell in love with Salvador, an unfaithful Spanish medical student.

When the writer finally left Wiesbaden for Paris, he was too late. Crying over the situation did little good. Polina - who well knew the writer was obsessed with her - flaunted her power over him.

Maria, meanwhile, never got used to St. Petersburg. As her illness worsened, she spent summers in the provincial city of Vladimir. While her husband gambled in the West, she was losing her battle with life.

Because he was married, Dostoevsky did his best to conceal his relationship with Polina. That, undoubtedly, was humiliating for the proud, strong-willed young woman. She did agree to meet him in Baden-Baden where the writer wanted to play the roulette tables at Germany's world-famous casino (which still exists.)

In Baden-Baden, the two were often at odds. The more Polina spurned him, the more Dostoevsky gambled. The bigger his stakes, the worse his losses.

The writer, capable of producing some of the greatest literature the world has ever known, was incapable of walking away with his winnings. He was, experts say, pathologically obsessed with the roulette wheel. When his self-described (but inaccurate) "fail-safe" system helped him win 600 francs, he turned the win into a 3,000-franc loss.

When we read Dostoevsky's novels, we quickly sense that Fyodor believed suffering is the essence of life. Perhaps he came to that understanding in the penal colony. Perhaps he learned it at the roulette wheel or at the firing-squad line.

One thing is sure: He brought the story of his love for Polina, and his addiction to gambling, into a new novel with an apt title.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DOSTOEVSKY-the-GAMBLER-Dostoevsky)

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Wiesbaden

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Vladimir, Russia

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Casino at Baden-Baden

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Game Tables at Baden-Baden Casino

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Dostoevsky - by Joseph Frank

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