

Notes from Underground, part 2.

What we get a glimpse of in part 1 is that UM derives his expectations for life from the literature that he spends most of his time reading. We see in part 2, *Apropos of Wet Snow*, that these expectations stand in stark contrast to the reality of the world in which he actually lives. This disparity alienates UM from that reality, and the society which makes it tangible.

In part 2, UM puts forth a narrative describing himself as he was sixteen years earlier, at the age of twenty-four. Even in his twenties, UM already demonstrates that he is misanthropic, proud, self-effacing, and bitter. However, he also still clings to certain ideals. He is passionate about literature, craves human attention, and wants others to respect and admire him for his intelligence and passion. He is also occasionally subject to fits of idealism. In the course of the second part of the novel, however, we see how the Underground Man's inability to interact with other people causes his attempts to form relationships and participate in life to end in disaster, and drives him deeper underground.

Some things we can determine about UM from part 2:

UM seems only to be able to interact with the world contemptuously, his interactions usually angry, bitter, vengeful, and just plain nasty.

UM's conception of love seems limited to the idea of one person's complete dominion over another.

In order to feel that he has participated in life in some way, he often instigates conflict with others and subjects himself to profound humiliation.

Study Guide Questions:

D4.1. What is the significance of the return to the imagery of the wet snow, and the illuminating descriptions of the weather?

D4.2 Why do you think the UM chooses to constantly and intentionally put himself into humiliating circumstances?

D4.3 How would you describe the UM's attitude toward Zverkov? Why do you suppose he feels this way? What does Zverkov represent to the UM? How does the UM describe Zverkov? Can we trust UM's description?

D4.4 How would you describe UM's relationship with Liza? (Hint: there are two ways to answer this question. One way is to describe it terms of the reality of UM's life expectations. The other is to describe it in terms of the reality in which UM actually exists.) What does Liza represent to UM? How does UM's interaction with Liza contribute to our understanding of him?