



Extra training

Reading

Task

036

Read the text and for questions 1—6, choose the correct answer.

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was born in Moscow in 1821. He was the son of retired military surgeon, who had a small estate, and was educated at home until the death of his mother in 1837. That same year, he and his brother, Mikhail, were sent to Military Engineering Academy in St Petersburg by his somewhat stern and oppressive father. While Dostoevsky was still at military school his father died and there were rumours that he was assassinated by his serfs, but this was never proven. It seems more likely that he died of a stroke.

Dostoevsky graduated from the Military Engineering Academy as an engineer, but knew that a career in the army wasn't suitable for him. He wished to pursue his interest in literature. In 1844, thanks to a small income from his father's estate, he was able to resign from the army and devote his energies to writing. His first novel, *Poor Folk*, was published in 1846 and was soon followed by a second, *The Double*,

It was around this time that Dostoevsky started taking an active interest in politics, and this would determine many things in his life over the coming years. He joined a group of Utopian socialists called the Petrashevsky Circle that used to hold political meetings in the home of an eccentric named Petrashevsky. Unfortunately, the secret police had placed a spy in the group and on the evening of 23rd April, 1849. Dostoevsky was arrested along with some other men and

sentenced to death. He wasn't executed, but spent the next four years in a hard labour camp in Siberia with criminals who had been convicted of murder. On his release he was forced to join the army as a common soldier. In 1857, Dostoevsky married Maria Isaeva and later resigned from the army. Dostoevsky's time in Siberia had a profound effect on him and he returned to St Petersburg in 1859 a monarchist and a devout follower of the Russian Orthodox Church.

During the 1860s Dostoevsky would publish three works based in one way or another on his experience in Siberia, the most poignant being *The House of the Dead* (1860), a fictional account of prison life. He travelled to Europe and continued to write, but after the death of his wife and his brother he became obsessed with gambling and drinking. In 1864, he published one of his greatest works entitled *Notes from the Underground* which begins with the narrator's words "I am a sick man. ... I am a spiteful man," and in which Dostoevsky satirises contemporary social and political views.

Dostoevsky married again in 1867 shortly after completing his masterpiece *Crime and Punishment* (1866). He then wrote a number of other interesting works such as *The Idiot* (1868-69) and *The Possessed* (1872). He died in St Petersburg on 9th February, 1881.

1. Dostoevsky's father used to be ____.

1. an army engineer 2. a doctor 3. a serf 4. a teacher.

2. Dostoevsky financed his writing with ____.

1. his estate agent salary. 3. his army income
2. rent from his property 4. inheritance money

3. In the 1840s Dostoevsky's political ideas could be best described as

1. orthodox. 2. eccentric 3. idealist 4. monarchist

4. In the late 1850s his beliefs were mostly influenced by ____.

1. his experience in the army.
2. the Petrashevsky Circle.
3. his experience in prison
4. criminals he had met.

5. His first wife's death ____.

1. became his obsession
2. inspired his writing.
3. had a devastating effect on him
4. made him a little sad

6. In *Notes from the Underground*, he ____.

1. describes his travels in Europe
2. expresses his belief in contemporary values.
3. makes fun of contemporary politics
4. criticizes his obsession with gambling

