

Matt Kubus

Mr. Kubus

AP English Literature

06 September 2022

Sample *Crime and Punishment* Plan and Sample Body Paragraphs

Subject/theme: the novel's moral outlook; Razumikhin superior to Raskolnikov

How I will approach that subject: through Razumikhin and feeling/heart
My passage: page 111

Opening ¶: define novel's contrast of moral views, "science" to feeling/heart.

Focus: Razumikhin and heart.

Thesis: In characteristically direct and simple terms, Razumikhin defines the key to human morality: "an honest and sensitive man opens his heart," he tells Raskolnikov in Part 2 (125). In so doing, Razumikhin sets the heart—feeling—as the truest guide to moral human action. No character better exemplifies the profound truth of that guide than Razumikhin himself.

¶: Even in seemingly small moments, Razumikhin proves that the heart best guides moral action. After the murder, Raskolnikov is wrecked, making a weird visit to Razumikhin's apartment only to leave in a weirder way to retreat to his closet. The strangeness of the encounter troubles Razumikhin, who immediately senses Raskolnikov's distress and responds emotionally to it: "What's with you' he cried, looking his entering friend over from head to foot; then he paused and whistled. 'It's that bad is it? You've even outdone me, brother...Sit down, you must be tired,'" he says (111). Razumikhin's reaction follows a simple path: a question; an examination; an exclamation (Notice that telling whistle!); a conclusion; and an action. Although Razumikhin does ask a question and quickly examine Raskolnikov, the result is not a

metaphysical inquiry concerned with the intellectual *idea* of suffering but an empathetic action intended practically to *relieve* that suffering: Razumikhin invites Raskolnikov to sit down to remedy his exhaustion. Simple but profound empathy and concern, not intellectual understanding, prompt Razumikhin's response to Raskolnikov's suffering, and in this moment they're the only responses that humanly matter. Razumikhin cares more for the effects of Raskolnikov's pain than their causes. What moral difference do those causes make, anyway? If they matter at all, they matter later, not now, something wise Razumikhin knows all too well: human suffering deserves our empathy and our quick intervention. And notice how Razumikhin addresses Raskolnikov. Razumikhin calls him "brother," not man or dude, not even Raskolnikov, but "brother," an address expressing Razumikhin's deep sense of universal human connection and feeling, his profound and immediate sense of moral concern based on their "kinship." Universal connectedness, our duty to our fellow people, a duty spurred by feeling empathy for them, is, as Razumikhin shows here and everywhere, the very basis for moral action. The heart, not the head, feeling, not intellect, indeed, are the surest drivers of moral action. A standard as simple but profound as Razumikhin himself. Razumikhin's moral responses to Raskolnikov's suffering seem more profound still when we remember that Raskolnikov is a man who, the narrator tells us, is not a close friend of Razumikhin's and who Razumikhin hasn't seen for several months, a man "haughtily proud and unsociable" (51), who two months ago, chancing to see Razumikhin on the street, "even crossed to the other side so as not to be noticed (52). Raskolnikov has done nothing to earn Razumikhin's kindness. Indeed, Raskolnikov's behavior might well prompt a lesser man to offense at the obvious rebuff. But Razumikhin is more gracious, more genuinely feeling and therefore more moral than the "normal" man, thinking then and now of Raskolnikov as a "friend," not because of literal kinship ties implying a duty based in

blood or an experiential bond but simply because Razumikhin's heart tells him so, because Raskolnikov is, as Razumikhin says, his "brother" (52). All men are brothers we imagine to be Razumikhin's deeply moral creed, a creed requiring no philosophy other than the love of simple wisdom. No wonder the narrator describes him as "an exceptionally cheerful and sociable fellow, kind to the point of simplicity (51). Razumikhin's profound simplicity of feeling is exactly the moral point.

Two more samples:

(1) Note the observational nature of this first ¶. Do you see the writer introducing evidence to support and develop his TS? Not really. The evidence he does include really doesn't support or develop TS. The TS is pretty clear: ¶ will work from the tavern conversation to show how/why R's arrogance pushed him to wrongly justify the murder, showing the immorality of that justification. A fine idea. But what does the ¶ do to argue that idea from evidence? Nothing, really. He merely makes some general statements. I'm unconvinced. Are you?

¶: The tavern conversation pushed Raskolnikov to rationalize the murder because of his arrogance, showing his immorality for being able to justify the murder of a human being.

Raskolnikov overhears two people talking about murdering the old lady when "exactly the same thoughts had just been conceived in his own head" sparking him to begin rationalizing committing the crime (66). The rationalization is Raskolnikov's arrogance at work, displaying his hate for Alyona and how he must get rid of her for his own good. His arrogance being the reason for the rationalization, Raskolnikov truly believed that the fact that murdering Alyona is "simple arithmetic" was a valid reason to commit the crime (65). *The fake validity that Raskolnikov confirms with simple math shows how his arrogance is a limiting factor in being able to see the immorality in committing such a harsh crime. The limiting factor is that he keeps telling himself that murdering Alyona is the right thing, in fear of being wrong and finding out that it was not the right thing to do. Raskolnikov's arrogance is above everything else, which in return makes it impossible for him to see the immorality in the crime.*

(2) Now consider this stronger example ¶. First notice something pretty basic: it's longer than the weaker example. Why? It includes evidence and development. See the difference between the two ¶s? Note, for example, how the stronger ¶ uses phrases—analytical modifiers!—to elaborate his quotations. You can look at your writing to check for some concrete and unmistakable elements, phrases to the right of quotations are one of those elements. If you don't see them, then chances are good that you're not elaborating your quotations as you should and that you're not working from evidence as you should.

¶: Raskolnikov *first* acknowledges God when he is flabbergasted and in a state of desperation, facing an identity crisis, momentarily dropping to his knees and praying, thinking of God as a last resort, before his diluted mind denies God. *After* trying to prove to himself he is a godly figure by thinking he has the right to murder, Raskolnikov *soon* realizes he is not who he thinks he is after receiving a summons from the police station. “In tormenting bewilderment” he looks at the summons and cannot believe his eyes when, without thinking, he “fell on his knees to pray”, begging God to help him in a time of need because he realizes God is the only one who can get him out of this situation, he cannot do it on his own. (93) *By praying*, Raskolnikov displays an acknowledgement of God as a higher power than himself something he hadn't up to that point. Begging for mercy in his prayer, Raskolnikov exclaims, “ Lord get it over with” which could also show repentance in Raskolnikov for the crime he committed, for the first time recognizing his wrong and accepting the punishment that comes with it only praying to God that he would begin his punishment now. (93) Immediately after this short religious experience however, Raskolnikov becomes hard hearted and turns his back on God even bursting out laughing, showing his inner power struggle between pride in himself, thinking that he is a extraordinary person and a reverence for a higher power. His delusional reason forces him to deny God, but Raskolnikov in his subconscious recognizes that there is a higher power than himself from the very beginning.