

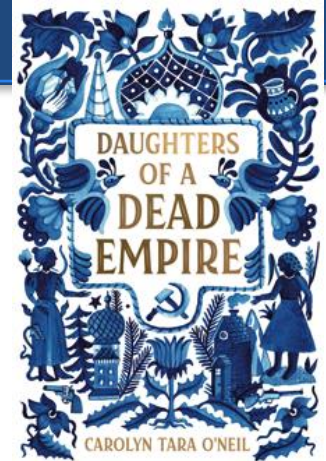
DAUGHTERS OF A DEAD EMPIRE

BY CAROLYN TARA O'NEIL

Teachers' Guide

*Young Adult Fiction – Historical – European History – Russian History
20th century – WWI – Revolution – Income Inequality – Poverty – War
Political partisanship – Ideology – Communism – Activism*

Roaring Brook Press | Hardcover, 336 pages | 2022
\$18.99 | 9781250755537 | Ages 14-18



About this Book

A thrilling Anastasia retelling set during the Russian Revolution that addresses class inequality and friendship across social divides. *Daughters of a Dead Empire* is a fast-paced alternate history that follows two young women as they flee from the Red Army—one a peasant and proud member of the Bolshevik party, and the other a battered, bourgeois girl who's harboring a secret that could cost them their lives.

Content Warnings: Graphic violence, death, strong language.

About the Author

Carolyn Tara O'Neil grew up in a tiny New York City apartment filled with thousands of books. Every Friday she went to the public library for even more reading material. She now lives in a slightly smaller NYC apartment with slightly fewer books, and still goes to the library every week.

In between then and now, Carolyn has lived in France, Spain, and Japan, and has dedicated her career to the rights and education of young people. She loves to travel, study languages, and spend endless hours discussing TV, books, great hiking trails, and how we can work together to build a more equal society.

This guide is intended to support your classroom instruction.
Please adapt the activities and questions to meet the needs of your students.
You know your students better than anyone else!

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Discussion Questions

1. Why is this story told in dual-POV? How would it be different if we only had Anna's or Evgenia's POV? Which POV did you prefer?
2. Why does Evgenia rescue Anna from the fire in Pavlovo? What are the consequences of this decision? How does it change the course of their lives?
3. What rights does Evgenia want for herself and her family?
4. What are the different political ideologies presented in this book? What terminology would we use to refer to them today? E.g. communist, socialist, capitalist, democratic, authoritarian, autocratic, etc.?
5. Why do you think Anna gives up her jewels at the end? Do you think this was in-character?
6. Why do you think Evgenia tells Anna to keep a few jewels at the end? Do you think this was in-character?
7. Why do you think the Czech soldiers refuse to help Anna at the end?
8. What do Anna and Evgenia owe each other, given their backgrounds? Do they bear any responsibility for the actions of their parents, friends, or allies?
 - a. James Baldwin once said, "it is the innocence which constitutes the crime." Does that apply here?
9. What is communism? How do Evgenia and Anton's understandings of communism differ from how we understand it today? Can there be communism and democracy at the same time?
10. What does the Bolshevik Party represent for women and girls like Evgenia? How were their lives limited under the imperial or local governments?
11. How is Evgenia's experience of poverty different from or similar to how millions of poor Americans experience poverty today?
12. How was the treatment of peasants in Russia different from or similar to the treatment of marginalized groups in America today?

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13. Consider this exchange from page 271:

"But," I narrowed my eyes at her, "I prefer a peaceful revolution."
She shook her head.
"There's no such thing."

Can revolutions be peaceful? Mao Zedong once said, "Revolution is not a dinner party." Consider examples like the French or American Revolutions, in contrast to the Indian Independence Movement or the American Civil Rights movement – were they all revolutions? Were any of them peaceful?

14. Do revolutions work? Why are some revolutions successful and lasting, while others lead to new forms of tyranny? If not revolution, how else can we combat oppression and tyranny? How can we defeat it? And how many lives is such a victory worth?

Journal Prompts/Reflection Questions

- Anna and Evgenia both disagree with their parents on certain issues. Do you agree with your family when it comes to politics? Where do you agree or disagree? Why do you think that is?
- Anna and Evgenia both look to their older siblings for guidance. Who do you look up to in your life, and why?
- Over the course of the novel, Anna and Evgenia learn to care for each other despite their different backgrounds and political beliefs. Consider these questions:
 - Do any of your friends disagree with you on important issues? How do you have conversations with them about it?
 - Do any of your friends come from different backgrounds? How are you different – racially? Economically? Ethnically? Religiously? How does this impact your friendship? What have you learned from this friendship?
 - Are there any beliefs someone could have that would prevent you from being friends with them? Are there any beliefs *you* have that might prevent someone from wanting to be friends with you?
 - What do you owe to your fellow citizens and neighbors who may disagree with you?

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Essay Topics

- Compare and contrast Evgenia's political beliefs with Yurovsky, her brother Kostya, or with her mother.
- Compare and contrast the role of religion for Evgenia vs. Anna. How do their beliefs dovetail with Tsarist vs. Communist beliefs about religion?
- Explain Evgenia's relationship with money.
- Describe the way that Anna or Evgenia change over the course of the novel. What are the key moments in their development?
- What kinds of ideology did Evgenia learn as a communist? Why would this have appealed to her? Where are the dangers in this ideology?
- What kinds of ideology did Anna learn from her parents? Why would this have appealed to her? Where are the dangers in this ideology?

Research & Activities

- Research the history of the Russian Revolution. Who led it? Why did it happen? Compare and contrast the February and October Revolutions.
- How did Russia's role in World War I contribute to the Russian Revolution?
- How did the Russian Revolution impact the events of World War I?
- Research the history of the Bolshevik Party in Russia. How did they come to power? Were their methods peaceful? What did they believe in? Did they grant Russians the rights that they promised to their supporters?
- Investigate the life and reign of Tsar Nicholas II and Tsaritsa Alexandra. What kind of rulers were they? Why were they overthrown? Refer to the Bibliography in *Daughters of a Dead Empire* for further reading on the Romanov family.
- What was the Czecho-Slovak Legion fighting for? Why did they ally with the White Army in Russia? How long did the alliance last, and why?
- What do you think is the political standpoint of the author? How can you find out more to verify your impression? Does knowing about the author's political beliefs impact your understanding of the novel? How can you distinguish between a character's beliefs and an author's beliefs?
- How did industrialization, and the migration of peasants to cities, contribute to the Russian Revolution?
- Compare and contrast the Russian Revolution with other revolutions or social movements in history. Consider the French or American Revolutions, the Indian Independence Movement, or the American Civil Rights movement.