

Topic Page: [Turgenev, Ivan \(1818 - 1883\)](#)

Summary Article: **Turgenev, Ivan Sergeyevich**

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(ĕvān' syĭrgā'ĕvĭch tōrgā'nyĭf), 1818–83, Russian novelist, dramatist, and short-story writer, considered one of the foremost Russian writers. He came from a landowning family in Orel province, and his cruel, domineering mother was a great influence on his life. Turgenev studied in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Berlin, and he became an enthusiastic advocate of the Westernization of Russia. His early writings were published in Nekrasov's journal *The Contemporary*. He won his first success in 1847 with “Khor and Kalinich,” a sympathetic story of peasant life, which was published later, with similar stories, in *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852). In this book he attacked serfdom, and it is thought that this work helped induce Alexander II to emancipate the serfs. Turgenev's most fruitful period was the decade 1850–60, the latter half of which he spent in Western Europe. In his novels of this period, which include *Rudin* (1855), *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (1859), and *On the Eve* (1860), Turgenev is concerned with Russian social and political issues. His masterpiece, *Fathers and Sons* (1862), deals with nihilist philosophy and personal and social rebellion. The novel was severely criticized, and Turgenev resolved to remain outside Russia, where he could continue his lifelong love affair with the French singer Pauline Viardot-Garcia. His last long works were *Smoke* (1867) and *Virgin Soil* (1877), both of which treated social themes. Turgenev also wrote several plays, including *A Month in the Country* (1850), in which he made several dramatic innovations that Chekhov later developed, and the comedy *A Provincial Lady* (1851). His superbly crafted novellas and short stories are considered his greatest works, including “First Love” (1870), “A Lear of the Steppe” (1870), and “Torrents of Spring” (1872). His works remain enormously popular in the USSR. Almost all of them are available in English.

See his *Literary Reminiscences* (1958);

his letters (tr. 1960);

biographies by D. Magarshack (1954),

A. Yarmolinsky (rev. ed. 1959), and J. A. T. Lloyd (1942, repr. 1971);

study by R. Freeborn (1960).

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