

“Ivan Denisovich” DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for the September 26th meeting:

- 1.) The year is 1951, Stalin has two more years to live, and Ivan Denisovich Shukhov is serving a 10-year sentence in a work camp on trumped-up charges. How does Shukhov's “crime” compare with that of Senka Klevin and that of Gopchik? Why does Alyosha view prison as a “blessing”?
- 2.) Why does Shukhov almost get put in solitary confinement—“the hole”—and how does he manage to evade it? What does Buynovsky do that lands him in the hole? Why is Fetyukov generally looked down upon by fellow prisoners, and what good deed does he do for Shukhov?
- 3.) What are family members allowed to send to incarcerated loved ones, and why has Shukhov cut off communication with his family? What advice from his wife does Shukhov reject and why?
- 4.) How do Shukhov and Senka Klevshin stand out in the camp, and why is Klevshin so popular?
- 5.) In what ways does Shukhov manage to get extra food? How and why does Tsezar help him?
- 6.) What is there about camp foreman Tyurin and his deputy Pavlo that earns them respect?
- 7.) At the end of Shukhov's day, how is he kind to Alyoshka, and what motivates this kindness?

“Quiet Don” DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for the November 21st meeting:

- 1.) It's 1912, just prior to WWI. How has the Melenkhov family earned the respect of the Cossack community of Tatarsk. What incident in the past accounts for the family's nickname—“Turks”?
- 2.) Why does Grigory Panteleyevich Melekhov grow to despise Stephan Astakhov, and what do Grigory & Aksinia Astakhov do that causes a feud between the Melekhovs and Stepan Astakhov?
- 3.) During WWI, on the Austro-Hungarian front, what transpires between Grigory and Stepan, and how does Grigory's father react to the news? Upon return, why does Grigory marry Natalya?
- 4.) What is Grigory's plight in in the Civil War, and how does it affect his political ideology?
- 5.) What causes Natalya's death, and how does Grigory cope with raising two kids on his own?
- 6.) What mutual risk do Grigory and Aksinia decide to take, and, in your opinion, was it ethical?
- 7.) In light of Sholokhov's socialist realist reputation, what's your reaction to the novel's ending?