

## Discussion Questions

- 1 What are Yurii Zhivago's strengths? What are his flaws? Do you feel empathy for his character in the book? In the film? Does he display courage in his personal life? In his professional life?
- 2 Compare Tonia and Lara. What draws Zhivago to each of them? What do you think motivates Zhivago to choose Lara over Tonia? How do you interpret what happens in the scene where the two women meet?
- 3 Why do you think Yurii Zhivago writes poetry? In the film he says he writes about "The world. Love. Particular people. How extraordinary it all is. What a gift it is to be alive in the world and to know you're alive." Did this surprise you? How do other characters—Tonia, Lara, Masha, Victor, Strelnikov—react to his poetry? Why does Zhivago's poetry put him at risk politically?
- 4 What do you think about the relationship between Komarovskiy and Lara? How does Lara feel about him? How do her feelings change? Revisit the scene in which she offers herself to Victor. Why does she do this? How do her feelings change over the years?
- 5 Do you think *Doctor Zhivago* is a love story or a political one? What other works of literature or film cross this boundary?
- 6 Compare *Doctor Zhivago* to other famous Russian novels, poetry, and films, such as those by Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Pushkin, and Chekhov. What themes do these stories have in common? How are women portrayed? How does the rise of Communism impact the characters?
- 7 Compare the opening of the MASTERPIECE film to the opening of the well-known 1965 film version starring Omar Sharif. How are they similar? Which details have been changed? Which version do you prefer?

*Doctor Zhivago*, by Boris Pasternak, was first published in 1957. For more about the MASTERPIECE film *Doctor Zhivago* and related features, visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/zhivago/index.html>.

You can purchase the *Doctor Zhivago* DVD from [shoppbs.org](http://shoppbs.org). Enter code BOOKANDFILM during checkout to receive a 15% discount.



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