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Oblomov

Ivan Goncharov · *1859 · C. J. Hogarth (1915)*

Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov, a gentleman a little over thirty, is discovered in bed in Gorokhovaya Street and is in no hurry to leave it. Friends, a love, and a faithful servant pass through the flat; the disease, his friend Schtoltz will say, is Oblomovka. This is C. J. Hogarth's 1915 English.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What is the disease of Oblomovka, and can a kind, intelligent man be ruined simply by not beginning?

"The cause was--the disease of Oblomovka."

Schtoltz · The close, looking back on his friend

Oblomov is not a villain. His soul, Schtoltz says, was clear and bright as glass; he was a gentleman to the core—and he fell. The childhood at Oblomovka, the soft routine, the fear of the world's demand to 'go forward unceasingly,' make a comedy of dressing-gowns and a tragedy of unused life. Olga almost raises him; Agafya cares for him in a quieter house. Hogarth's 1915 translation is the complete published English this site hosts (it is shorter-feeling than some later versions). The last word is a diagnosis, not a sneer.

KEY CHARACTERS

Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov
A kind, intelligent gentleman whose will cannot leave the sofa for long.

Andrei Schtoltz
His energetic friend, who loves him and cannot save him.

Olga
The woman who almost raises him into a living future.

Agafya Matveyevna
The quiet landlady whose care becomes his last home.

Zakhar
The servant, loyal, messy, and a mirror of the house's inertia.

A DISEASE WITH A PLACE-NAME

> *"there was lying in bed a gentleman named Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov."*
>
> The opening

> *"The cause was--the disease of Oblomovka."*
>
> **Schtoltz** · The close

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

A Gentleman in Bed

PART I

Oblomov lies in bed, receives callers, and cannot quite decide to rise, to write, or to deal with his estate. Zakhar, the servant, shares the inertia.

- The opening scene is a character in a dressing-gown, not yet a symbol.
- Visitors bring the day's news; he remains the still center.
- The thought of going forward is already a kind of pain.

> *"there was lying in bed a gentleman named Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov."*
>
> Part I, the opening

02

Oblomovka

PART I, THE DREAM AND MEMORY

The estate of his childhood appears as a lost, sealed world of plenty, naps, and a life without haste. It is a paradise and a cause.

- The name will become a diagnosis at the end.
- The idyll explains more than it excuses.
- Schtoltz, the half-German friend, is already the contrasting will.

03

Olga

PARTS II–III

Schtoltz introduces him to Olga. Love almost makes him rise, act, and plan a life. The almost is the story.

- Olga is intelligent and in earnest; she is not a mere reward.
- Letters, delays, and the pull of the sofa begin to win.
- The failure is gradual, not a single fall.

04

A Quieter House

PART IV

He settles into the care of Agafya Matveyevna, a simple, kind widow, and the old peace returns in a smaller, sadder form.

- This care is real, and it is also a surrender.
- Schtoltz and Olga have a life of work he cannot enter.
- Zakhar remains, a comic shadow of the same disease.

05

The Disease of Oblomovka

THE CLOSE

Years later Schtoltz, asked what became of his friend, says he came to rack and ruin for no apparent reason—and then names the cause.

- 'His intellect was equal to that of his fellow's, his soul was as clear and as bright as glass… Yet he—he fell.'
- The cause is not a crime but a habit of a world.
- Hogarth's last pages ask that the story be written down 'for they might prove of value to some one.'

Sloth and Inertia · A Wasted Gift · Friendship · A Lost Estate · Will

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. The hosted text is C. J. Hogarth's 1915 English translation (Project Gutenberg #54700), in four parts. The street is spelled Gorokliovaia in this text's opening. Character names include Ilya Ilyitch and Schtoltz (Hogarth's forms).
2. Exact close: "The cause was--the disease of Oblomovka." (two hyphens). The opening names "a gentleman named Ilya Ilyitch Oblomov" found "lying in bed."
3. Hogarth is a complete published translation, somewhat leaner than some later English versions. Quote this text, not a later one, and do not call the book a fragment.
4. The novel is a comedy of a man in bed and a serious study of a wasted life. Teach both.

Quotations are verbatim from the C. J. Hogarth (1915), Project Gutenberg #54700, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/oblomov/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.