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The Golovlyov Family

Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin · *1875–1880 · Avrahm Yarmolinsky*

A provincial landowning family eats itself: the mother clutches the estate, the children scatter or drink, and the most pious son, nicknamed Yudushka, talks piety while he drains every living soul around him. This is Avrahm Yarmolinsky's English. The Project Gutenberg title is A Family of Noblemen.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What happens to a house when empty talk of God and family is used as a tool to devour the family itself?

"Porfiry Vladimirych was known in the family by three nicknames, Yudushka (diminutive of Judas), Bloodsucker, and Goody-goody Boy"

The early portrait of Porfiry

Arina Petrovna rules the Golovliov estate with a hard hand and a mother's anxiety. One son is a drunk, one a simpleton, a daughter dies leaving children on the grandmother's hands, and Porfiry, the dear boy who curries favor, inherits both the land and a deadly power of speech. Yarmolinsky's English is plain and merciless. The PG volume is titled A Family of Noblemen; the site lists the book as The Golovlyov Family. This is not a comic family chronicle. It is a long study of hypocrisy, and it ends in a darkness older students can bear if they are prepared.

KEY CHARACTERS

Arina Petrovna Golovliov
The mother who keeps the estate, and who cannot finally keep the family.

Porfiry Vladimirych (Yudushka)
The pious son whose nicknames—Judas, Bloodsucker, Goody-goody Boy—name him truly.

The other Golovliov children
A drunkard, a simpleton, a daughter who dies and leaves her children behind.

The grandchildren
The next lives caught in the same house.

THREE NICKNAMES

> *"Porfiry Vladimirych was known in the family by three nicknames, Yudushka (diminutive of Judas), Bloodsucker, and Goody-goody Boy"*
>
> The early portrait of Porfiry

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

01
A Mother and an Estate
THE OPENING

Arina Petrovna Golovliov holds the property together and receives accounts from town. The family already has its cruel nicknames and its wastes.

- The estate is a moral weather, not only a setting.
- A mother's strength can also be a form of fear.
- Watch how money and 'dear mamma' talk work from the first pages.

02
The Children Scatter
THE EARLY AND MIDDLE PARTS

Sons drink or fail; a daughter dies 'indecently'; grandchildren are left like a burden. The house begins to empty while it is still full of talk.

- Saltykov-Shchedrin is satirical and tragic at once.
- No child is simply a villain at first; vice is a long habit.
- The grandmother's letters already sound the book's hard tone.

03
Yudushka
PORFIRY'S RISE

Porfiry Vladimirych, the goody-goody, wins the place of power. His nicknames tell the truth his prayers hide: Judas, Bloodsucker.

- Quote the three nicknames from this English: Yudushka, Bloodsucker, and Goody-goody Boy.
- His weapon is talk—endless, pious, and emptying.
- This is the book's central study: a soul that uses God as a cover.

> *"Porfiry Vladimirych was known in the family by three nicknames, Yudushka (diminutive of Judas), Bloodsucker, and Goody-goody Boy"*
>
> The early portrait of Porfiry

04
The House Empties
THE LATER CHAPTERS

Dependents die or flee. Porfiry's own sons are not saved by his piety. The rooms of Golovliovo grow still.

- Do not look for a late conversion that the book does not honestly earn until its last bitter turn.
- The grandchildren's fates are part of the indictment.
- The satire becomes almost liturgical in its repetition.

05
A Last Darkness
THE CLOSE

What remains is loneliness, a late horror of conscience, and a house that has consumed its people. The title on some title pages is A Family of Noblemen; the story is the same.

- Flag the alternate English title so students are not confused.
- The spelling in this text is Golovliov / Golovliovo; the site slug is the-golovlyov-family.
- This is Adult/Advanced work: hypocrisy, drink, ruined lives, a grim end.

Hypocrisy | A Devouring House | False Piety | Family and Money | Loneliness

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. The hosted text is Avrahm Yarmolinsky's 1917 English (Project Gutenberg #44237). The PG title is A Family of Noblemen; the site lists the work as The Golovlyov Family. Both the text and the EPUB are the complete novel (~111k words). Flag the alternate title.
2. This English spells the family Golovliov / Golovliovo and the son Porfiry Vladimirych. His nicknames are exact: "Yudushka (diminutive of Judas), Bloodsucker, and Goody-goody Boy."
3. The book is a long, grim satire of hypocrisy, drink, and a family destroyed from within. It belongs with older students, and it should not be taught as a light Russian comedy of manners.

Quotations are verbatim from the Avrahm Yarmolinsky, Project Gutenberg #44237, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-golovlyov-family/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.